



MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC FORUM

HELD ON 23 APRIL 2025

1. Opening

The Public Forum commenced at 5.38pm.

2. Special Presentation

On behalf of Keep Australia Beautiful (KAB), the Mayor presented Ian and Fran from Queanbeyan Landcare with the 2024 Biodiversity Conservation Award under the KAB NSW Tidy Towns program. This award was in recognition of Landcare's regenerative work along the Queanbeyan River, improving habitat connectivity along the river by planting trees, removing invasive weeds and community education.

3. Presentations relating to listed Items on the Council Agenda

The following presenters were heard:

	Name	Item no	Item description	For/Against
1	Anthony Hill – via Zoom	12.3	Notice of Motion - Public Meeting on Q2B Bulk Water Supply Pipeline	For
2	Robert Wilson	10.2	Final Project Costs Report - Nellie Hamilton Centre	Information
3	Tegan McInnes	12.2	Notice of Motion - Traffic Safety in Precinct of Karabar Schools	For

The following written presentations were received:

	Name	Item no	Item description	For/Against
1	Judith Turley	12.3	Notice of Motion - Public Meeting on Q2B Bulk Water Supply Pipeline	For
2	Maureen Elgood	12.3	Notice of Motion - Public Meeting on Q2B Bulk Water Supply Pipeline	For
3	Jill Gregory	12.3	Notice of Motion - Public Meeting on Q2B Bulk Water Supply Pipeline	For
4	David Webster	12.3	Notice of Motion - Public Meeting on Q2B Bulk Water Supply Pipeline	For
5	Richard Gregory	12.3	Notice of Motion - Public Meeting on Q2B Bulk Water Supply Pipeline	For

4. Petitions

There were no petitions submitted.

5. 'Questions on Notice' from the Public

Responses to the following 'Questions on Notice' received up to 16 April 2025 were provided and tabled at the meeting (see attached for responses):

Nos	Received from	In relation to:
1-9	Matt Smith	The Special Rate Variation
10-19	Queanbeyan Ratepayers and Residents Association	Queanbeyan Sewage Treatment Plant
20-32	Hugh Percy	Mayoral Vehicle, and the General Manager's credit card and overseas travel

6. Presentations by Invitation from the General Manager

There were no presentations.

7. Closure

As there were no further matters, the Public Forum closed at 5.51pm.



ATTACHMENT TO MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC FORUM HELD ON 23 April 2025

‘Questions on Notice’ from the Public

Responses to the following ‘Questions on Notice’ received up to Wednesday 16 April 2025 were provided and tabled at the meeting.

Questions submitted by: Matt Smith

- 1. In respect to the 18% Special Variation imposed by Council on ratepayers for Year 2023-2024, can Council report on the program of expenditure that was actually funded by the Additional Income, and any differences between this program and the Proposed Program for Year 2023-2024?**

A report is being prepared to be presented to an upcoming Council meeting.

- 2. In respect to the 18% Special Variation imposed by Council on ratepayers for Year 2023-2024, can Council report on any significant differences between the Council’s actual revenues, expenses and operating balance and the projected revenues, expenses and operating balance as outlined in its Long-Term Financial Plan (defined by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Instrument (IPART) dated 13 June 2023), and the reasons for those differences for Year 2023-2024?**

A report is being prepared to be presented to an upcoming Council meeting.

- 3. In respect to the 18% Special Variation imposed by Council on ratepayers for Year 2023-2024, can Council report on the outcomes achieved as a result of the Additional Income for Year 2023-2024?**

A report is being prepared to be presented to an upcoming Council meeting.

- 4. In respect to the 18% Special Variation imposed by Council on ratepayers for Year 2023-2024, can Council report on the productivity savings and cost containment measures the Council has in place, the annual savings achieved through these measures, and what these savings equate to as a proportion of the Council’s total annual expenditure for Year 2023-2024?**

A response to Questions With Notice was prepared and provided to the 26 March 2025 Ordinary Meeting of Council. The report responds to this question and can be found at item 14.6 in the meeting agenda available at: <https://www.qprc.nsw.gov.au/Council-meetings>

- 5. In respect to the 18% Special Variation imposed by Council on ratepayers for Year 2023-2024, can Council report on whether or not Council has implemented the productivity improvements identified in its IPART Application, and if not, the rationale for not implementing them for Year 2023-2024?**

See response to Q4.

- 6. On 13 June 2023 IPART issued a Special Variation Instrument to Council with Conditions, can Council report specifically on what systems and processes Council put in place (at the time) to comply with all of IPART's Conditions for Year 2023-2024?**

A report is being prepared to be presented to an upcoming Council meeting.

- 7. On 13 June 2023 IPART issued a Special Variation Instrument to Council with Conditions, can Council report specifically if any monitoring (monthly or quarterly or other) were put in place (at the time) to ensure compliance with all of IPART's Conditions for Year 2023-2024?**

A report is being prepared to be presented to an upcoming Council meeting.

- 8. On 13 June 2023 IPART issued a Special Variation Instrument to Council with Conditions, can Council report specifically if any of the Governing Body Members (at the time) were provided with a copy (https://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/cm9_documents/Instrument-2023-24-Queanbeyan-Palerang-Regional-Council-Special-Rate-Variation.PDF)?**

A copy of the IPART Determination was provided, however a copy of the IPART Instrument was not.

- 9. On 13 June 2023 IPART issued a Special Variation Instrument to Council with Conditions, can Council report specifically if any of the Governing Body Members (at the time) were informed of the specific reporting Conditions imposed by IPART?**

Council is aware that additional reporting should have been provided in the 2023-24 Annual Report. A report is being prepared for an upcoming Council meeting to implement the IPART conditions.

Questions submitted by: Queanbeyan Ratepayers and Residents Association

Preamble: Queanbeyan Sewage Treatment Plant

Below is a timeline, as far as we are able to discern regarding the progress on this major infrastructure project.

Aug 2015 – Masterplan by GHD

Oct 2015 – Plan revised

Nov 2016 – Public Exhibition

March 2017 Council Meeting

Business paper for the meeting outlined the urgent nature of the project and stated

“The existing Queanbeyan STP is in an advanced state of deterioration and at the end of its effective service life. Unless QPRC replaces the QSTP within the next 5 to 8 years, there is a very high risk of failure. QPRC is currently expending increasing funds for work/repairs to mitigate the risk of failure.”

19 June 2018 – Joint Media Release ICON Water and QPRC

*“ICON Water managing Director John Knox said ‘The Technical and commercial analysis has determined that a regional plant would **not** be the best solution over standalone treatment plants.’”*

The media release also stated that the new facility is expected to be in operation by 2024.

12 December 2023 – DA lodged with ACT Planning (EIGHT years after the initial Master Plan)

January 2024 QSTP Upgrade Newsletter

Anticipated Planning approval in 2024, construction in 2025 and Commission and Operation on the new plant in 2027.

April 2024 – Design Presentation and Virtual Tour provided the following key dates.

- Revised business case approved – June 2024
- Planning approval (EIS and Development Application) – August 2025
- Detailed design completion – mid 2025
- Construction Tender Award – early 2026
- Operation of the new STP – mid 2028
- Overall project completion – early 2029
- Estimated Cost \$188M
- 11 contracts awarded so far.

April 2025 – Item 9.3 Council Meeting

The Business papers for the meeting identified several critical actions that need to be taken including, but not limited to, a review of the project costs. The expected increase in the QSTP Upgrade budget will be included in the 2025/26 budget.

Alarming, the conclusion in the Business paper noted that QPRC had only responded to Further Requests for Information from the ACT on 24 March 2025, fifteen months after the lodgement of the DA. DA approval is now not expected until September 2025.

Also, at its 9 April Meeting the Council resolved to write to ICON Water to once again raise the possibility of a joint operation for a regional solution. The comments by the ICON Managing Director in 2018, implied that due to both technical and commercial considerations a joint project was not feasible

It is now ten years since the Master Plan was drawn up by GHD, during which time the cost has escalated. In 2015 the assessment was that the STP needed to be upgraded within 5-8 years to avoid potential adverse environmental consequences and that additional costs were being incurred to mitigate against such an eventuality.

10. What has changed since 2018 to suggest that ICON Water may now be amenable to a regional solution for the STP Upgrade?

At the 9 April 2025 Ordinary Meeting, Council determined to write to the ACT Government as the owner of ICON Water Limited to seek formal advice that a joint venture and regional solution has been considered from ICON Water's strategic plan perspective.

11. Why did it take QPRC over a year to respond to RFIs?

The work involved has been substantial in nature and included Heritage and Archaeological studies.

12. Previous estimates for the timing of DA approval have proved to be wrong. What guarantee does the QPRC now have that the DA will be approved by September 2025?

All of the issues raised through the EIS and DA processes have now been thoroughly addressed. Both the statutory and ACT Government entities involved understand the pressing need for the upgrade works.

13. The Queanbeyan Sewage Treatment Plant Upgrade page on the Council's website, identifies 11 contracts that have already been awarded. What is the cost of these contracts?

The contract values are as follows:

Contract 10/2015 – Sustainability Rating Support services to AECOM Australia Pty Ltd	\$336,205
Contract 12/2015 – Design Consulting Services to Hunter H2O Pty Ltd (Old Master Planning Contract, now replaced by 2019-34)	\$12,198,377
Contract 2020-54 – Supply & Delivery of Screening and Screening Washing Equipment to Hydroflux Epco Pty Ltd	\$2,603,645
Contract 2020-61 – Supply & Delivery of WAS Thickener Equipment to Hydroflux Epco Pty Ltd	Included in Contract 2020-54 above
Contract 2020-62 – Supply & Delivery of Clarifier Equipment to Hydroflux Epco Pty Ltd	Included in Contract 2020-54 above
Contract 2020-55 – Supply & Delivery of Grit removal equipment to VOR Environmental Australia Pty Ltd	\$385,379
Contract 2020-56 – Supply & Delivery of Bioreactor & Digester Aeration, Mixer Systems and Air Scour Blowers Equipment to Xylem Water Solution Australia Ltd	\$4,204,338
Contract 2020-57 – Supply & Delivery of UV Disinfection Equipment to Xylem Water Solution Australia Ltd	\$3,474,741
Contract 2020-60 – Supply & Delivery of Centrifuge Equipment to GEA Westfalia Separator Pty Ltd	\$607,527
Contract 2021-14 – Supply & Delivery of Scum Harvester Equipment to VOR Environmental Australia Pty Ltd	\$413,171
Contract 2021-15 – Supply & Delivery of Chemical Dosing Skid Equipment to Trility Solutions Australia Pty Ltd	\$190,072

14. Will escalating costs affect or require revision contracts awarded so far?

Yes, all contracts that have been awarded include rise and fall clauses.

15. What are the pay out figures for contracts already awarded should the QPRC opt for the joint operation approach?

Most of the contracts are for supply and delivery of specialised equipment. Contracts needed to be awarded to ensure that exact specifications and precise dimensions could be determined and factored into design work. Each contract includes a clause relating to the termination of the contract and how costs would be calculated at that point in time. Generally, if Council terminated the contract, Council would be liable for costs incurred by the supplier. These costs would need to be established and agreed to.

16. Queanbeyan ratepayers have already be charged an additional 2% on sewer fees. From where will the expected additional funding be sourced?

The current IWCM and proposed sewer charge revenue meets the proposed expenditure that has been included in the current budget. The proposed expenditure allows for escalation due to the current delayed timeframes.

17. The 2015 Master Plan referred to the need for additional critical maintenance. What has been the cost of this critical maintenance over since 2015?

These works included upgrades to the electrical switchboard and the aerator or mixer. Critical maintenance since 2015 has included:

- New surface aerator: \$150,000
- Interconnection pipeline relining between tertiary ponds 2 & 3: >\$150,000
- Trickling filter repairs (numerous): \$100,000
- Switchboard repairs: \$50,000
- Pond 2 revetment (barrier to prevent erosion): \$50,000

18. As well as the cost of the major infrastructure of the STP Upgrade, the QPRC could be facing a significant cost associated with the building of the Bungendore Pipeline. With existing debt at \$140M, potentially \$200m for the STP Upgrade and \$100m for the Bungendore pipeline, QPRC's potential debt could be as high as \$500M. Where is this money coming from?

As per the QSTP Business Case and Integrated Water Cycle Management Plan (IWCM), the QSTP project is funded from Sewer Reserves and loan funds of \$110M. The proposed loan funding for the QSTP has not changed.

Council has not yet considered the Bungendore pipeline to progress beyond tender ready stage.

19. What grants have been obtained for construction of the STP Upgrade?

To date, \$3M has been secured through the Safe and Secure Water Program.

Questions submitted by: Hugh Percy

Mayoral Vehicle

20. What model vehicle is provided for the Mayor's use?

In accordance with the [Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy](#) (Clause 12.1) Council will provide to the Mayor a maintained vehicle to a similar standard of other Council vehicles, with a fuel card. The current vehicle is a Toyota Prado GXL

21. What is the cost of that vehicle?

\$74,882

22. Does use include private use? If so, what are the conditions and reimbursement arrangements to Council for private usage?

Private use is permitted. In accordance with the [Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy](#) (Clause 12.3) the Mayoral Allowance will be reduced to cover the cost of any private travel recorded in the log book, calculated on a per kilometre basis by the rate set by the Local Government (State) Award.

23. Does the vehicle attract FBT?

Any vehicle that can be used privately (that is not for Council business) attracts FBT. The FBT payable is reduced by the amount taken from the Mayoral Allowance to cover this private use.

24. If there is an FBT cost, then who pays?

There is no cost to Council of FBT as this is covered by the private use amount paid.

25. Is the Mayor required to maintain a logbook?

Yes

Credit Card - General Manager

26. Has the General Manager been issued with a Credit Card?

Yes

27. If so, has the Council formalised a policy for the use of that credit card (including reconciliation, approval and audit)?

Yes, Council has an approved Purchase Card Staff Policy.

28. If not, why not?

N/A

Overseas Travel - General Manager

Listed in the 2023/24 Annual Report is reference to Rebecca Ryan attending the Annual Conference of ICMA plus 3 Executive Board Meetings.

29. Who approved such travel? and under what authority?

The International City/County Managers Association (ICMA) Executive Director, under the authority of the ICMA Executive Board Constitution, Operational and Governance Procedures and Policies.

30. What was the justification for such travel in terms of value for Council operations and QPRC ratepayers?

The four trips undertaken by General Manager, Ms Rebecca Ryan that were reported in the 2023/24 Annual Report were in her capacity as a Board Member of the International City/Country Management Association (ICMA).

In 2021, Ms Ryan nominated for, and was successfully appointed, as the Regional Vice President and member of the ICMA Executive Board. The Mayor and Councillors supported the continuation of this role upon her appointment as General Manager to QPRC.

ICMA is the leading organisation of local government professionals dedicated to creating and sustaining thriving communities throughout the world. They work with more than 13,000 members to identify and speed the adoption of leading local government practices to improve the lives of residents. ICMA offers membership, professional development programs, research, publications, data and information, technical assistance, and training to local government chief administrative officers, their staff, and other organisations around the globe.

The learning opportunities, networking, and sharing of ideas provide direct benefits to the projects, activities and initiatives of QPRC. The conference provides exposure to new and emerging technologies for consideration by Council along with shared problem-solving opportunities.

31. What was the duration, purpose and location of each trip? Did Rebecca Ryan meet the total cost of each trip? Was Rebecca Ryan granted leave for each meeting?

ICMA Executive Board Meetings were held in:

- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (4 days),
- Bentonville, Arkansas (4 days),
- Vancouver, Canada (4 days); and the
- Austin, Texas (2 days)

The ICMA Annual Conference was held in Austin, Texas (5 days).

All travel, accommodation and expenses associated with ICMA Board Meetings were paid for by ICMA.

Travel, accommodation and expenses associated with the ICMA Annual Conference were paid for by Ms Ryan.

Ms Ryan was granted leave for each meeting as approved by the Mayor.

32. Did anyone from the Council accompany Rebecca Ryan on any of these trips and if so, who bore the cost of the accompanying person? Was the accompanying person granted leave to attend?

No