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17 August 2006



Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

ATTENTION: MR. BJARNE NORDIN

Dear Bjarne

INQUIRY INTO SPORTSGROUND MANAGEMENT IN NSW

In reference to the request for information on the management of sportsgrounds within the Dubbo City Council I have included the following documentation:

1. **Dubbo City Council-Sporting Facilities Function Plan.** This includes the Sporting Facilities Asset Plan. The Asset Plan includes 20 year rolling programs for all sporting facility assets controlled by Dubbo City Council and Capital Works program.
2. **Dubbo City Council-Recreation Services Function Plan.** This includes Fees and Charges pertaining to the charges of the use of sporting facilities controlled by Dubbo City Council.
3. **Dubbo City Council- Parks and Landcare Services Strategic Study 2004 (Volumes 1 and 2).** The scope of the study was to address the following issues:-

A "Dubbo City Horticultural, Arboreal, Sporting Facilities and Landcare Strategic Study" is submitted to the Council via the General Manager by December 2004 that:

- (i) Evaluates and quantifies Dubbo City's Horticultural/Arboreal/Sporting Facilities and Landcare condition prior to and up to 1995.
- (ii) Evaluates and quantifies initiatives and programmes undertaken post 1995 and up to 2003 and the outcomes of such activities (the present Horticultural/Arboreal/Sporting Facilities and Landcare condition of the City).
- (iii) Identifies and quantifies likely future trends, developments, opportunities, threats and legislation pertaining to the City's Horticultural/Arboreal/Landcare condition and capability.

All communications to:

THE GENERAL MANAGER PO BOX 81 CHURCH STREET DUBBO NSW 2830 T (02) 6801 4000 F (02) 6801 4259
CIVIC ADMINISTRATION BUILDING CHURCH STREET DUBBO NSW 2830 E dcc@dubbo.nsw.gov.au ABN 77 296 185 278

-
- (iv) Recommends (with quantified supporting data, programmes, Policies and initiatives) the strategic (by 2009) condition/objectives of the City, as a minimum, in terms of:
1. Global warming
 2. Salination
 3. Progressive increase in community participation/self help
 4. Drought
 5. Trends in user pays
 6. Federal, State and Dubbo relevant local government and statutory bodies legislation programmes and initiatives (Horticultural/Arboreal/Sporting Facilities and Landcare related)
 7. Government funding opportunities eg Telstra fund acquisition/sourcing methods and mechanism.
 8. Any and all other means by which the City's Horticultural/Arboreal/Landcare condition can be built upon/protected/enhanced.

If you have any queries arising from the supplied information please contact the undersigned through the Parks and Landcare office on 6801 4701.

Yours faithfully



Ian McAlister
Manager Sporting Facilities
Encl.

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1 Context and Scope of Study

1.1 Context

Dubbo, the vibrant city on the plains, meeting service and lifestyle needs, is at a critical point in its development.

A diverse and extensive Council capital works programme is currently underway and includes: -

• Airport terminal re-development	\$ 3.2M
• Apex oval grandstand development	\$ 2.8M
• Water treatment plant augmentation	\$10.7M
• Aquatic centre re-development	\$ 0.77M
• Victoria Park tennis complex	\$ 0.5M
• New Museum and Art Gallery	\$ 6.6M
• Greengrove effluent disposal project	\$ 7.5M
• Acquisition of 60 ha. of riverside parkland	\$ 0.82M
• New animal shelter	\$ 1.1M
• Refurbishment of the Civic Admin Building	\$ 5.9M
• Civic Centre refurbishment	\$ 1.4M
TOTAL	\$41.29m

In addition to this very significant Council building programme, recent and near future community development has and is occurring. Some of these are:-

- Continued development of the CSU Campus
- Continued development of the Senior College
- Upgrading of the Dubbo Base Hospital
- New RFDS base at Dubbo Airport
- Continued development of the Macquarie Anglican Grammar School
- Continued development of Dubbo's retail capacity
- Continued development of high quality housing estates including, Delroy Park, Kintyre, Yarrawonga, Keswick, Southlands and Holmwood.

Coupled with this civil and commercial infrastructure based development of the city, there is now a rapidly evolving focus on natural resource management, public health, communications and transport infrastructure.

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In this dynamic environment, Dubbo is right now confronted with some critical choices. If we make the right decisions now, the future for Dubbo looks fantastic. If, however we fail to confront the challenges, or make the wrong choices, the future for Dubbo will be that of another ordinary 'run of the mill' regional town.

In terms of learning from the past and planning for the future, the Parks and Landcare Division of Dubbo City Council have prepared a "Dubbo City Horticultural, Arboreal, Landcare and Sporting Facilities Strategic Study. These four professional disciplines of horticulture, arboriculture, landcare and sports field management represent the 'Core Business' of the Parks and Landcare Services Division.

In this study the following specific issues are examined in terms of the past, present and future for the development, protection and enhancement of the city's horticultural, arboricultural, sporting facilities and landcare condition:-

1. Return Dubbo's focus to the river
2. Deal with a significant number of new housing estates by 2009
3. Deal with the constraints of a static resource base
4. Address changes in legislation
5. Recognise an increasing understanding and appreciation of the natural environment
6. Appreciate Dubbo as a growth centre.

1.2 Scope of Study

The brief written to detail the scope of the study is as follows:-

A "Dubbo City Horticultural, Arboreal, Sporting Facilities and Landcare Strategic Study" is submitted to the Council via the General Manager by December 2004 that:

- (i) Evaluates and quantifies Dubbo City's Horticultural/Arboreal/Sporting Facilities and Landcare condition prior to and up to 1995.
- (ii) Evaluates and quantifies initiatives and programmes undertaken post 1995 and up to 2003 and the outcomes of such activities (the present Horticultural/Arboreal/Sporting Facilities and Landcare condition of the City).
- (iii) Identifies and quantifies likely future trends, developments, opportunities, threats and legislation pertaining to the City's Horticultural/Arboreal/Landcare condition and capability.
- (iv) Recommends (with quantified supporting data, programmes, Policies and initiatives) the strategic (by 2009) condition/objectives of the City, as a minimum, in terms of:
 - Global warming
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 - Drought
 - Trends in user pays

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- Federal, State and Dubbo relevant local government and statutory bodies legislation programmes and initiatives (Horticultural/Arboreal/Sporting Facilities and Landcare related)
- Government funding opportunities eg Telstra fund acquisition/sourcing methods and mechanism.
- Any and all other means by which the City's Horticultural/Arboreal/Landcare condition can be built upon/protected/enhanced.

This Strategic Study has been prepared in a format, which is specifically designed to meet the requirements of the brief and was prepared by staff of Dubbo City Councils Parks and Landcare Services Division.

The study provides detail on the achievements of the Parks and Landcare Services Division to date and sets the platform for a number of significant initiatives to be both continued and implemented over the next five years through to the year 2009.

The information and adopted recommendations contained in the study will form the foundation for the development of the 2005/2006 and subsequent years management plans, annual operating plans and budgets for the Parks and Landcare Services Division.

2 Executive Summary

The past ten (10) years has seen the development of the Parks and Landcare Services Division from an embryonic idea designed to dedicate resources to the maintenance and improvement of the horticultural assets of the City, through to an extremely active and professional Division of Council providing a wide range and expanding number of services to the community and its intra-council clients. To a very large extent the first ten (10) years of Parks and Landcare Services Division (1994-2004) has been defining its place within the operating framework of the greater organisation that is Dubbo City Council.

Since 1995 the Parks and Landcare Services Division have taken a strategic approach to the management of its functions, it has introduced modern and robust management systems and developed its trade and professional knowledge and skills. Indeed the Parks and Landcare Services Division won the 1999 Silver Rhino Award for its management systems. The Division has developed partnerships with the community, government and other Councils. The Division has developed and implemented many initiatives, projects and programs that have already contributed to the improvement of the horticultural and lifestyle quality of the City. Many of these will continue to have a positive impact on the city well into the future. Others are still being developed and implemented to suit the ever-changing needs and preferences of the community.

The next five (5) years has the potential for the Parks and Landcare Services Division to build on the many initiatives that it has already put in place and indeed move forward with new initiatives to protect and enhance Dubbo's horticultural, arboricultural, sporting facilities and landcare condition. The following points are considered to be the major challenges and opportunities for the Parks and Landcare Services Division for the next five years:-

1. Return Dubbo's focus to the river
2. Deal with a significant number of new housing estates by 2009
3. Deal with the constraints of a static resource base
4. Address changes in legislation
5. Recognise an increasing understanding and appreciation of the natural environment
6. Appreciate Dubbo as a growth centre.

It is clear from the detail contained in this study that there is an urgent need for council to identify and allocate additional resources for the maintenance management of its existing ageing Parks and Landcare infrastructure such as buildings and irrigation systems and for the additional public open space assets (and the infrastructure they contain) which will come on line over the next ten years. Estimates of the additional costs expected to be incurred in maintaining these new assets and ageing infrastructure, based on current standards are set out in Table 1 below: -

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TABLE 1

Estimated Increases In Routine Maintenance Costs Associated With Ageing Infrastructure and Acquisition of New Open Space Assets		
Year	Activity	Estimated/Actual cost \$
2005-06 ongoing to 2014-15	Irrigation systems replacement/upgrading	\$80,000 per year
2005-06 ongoing to 2014-15	Buildings/Amenities renewals & upgrades	\$45,000 per year
2006-07 progressively increasing by \$345,000 per year to 2009-10	138 Hectares of additional high quality parks maintenance by 2009	\$345,000 per year
2005-06 ongoing to 2014-15	Introduction of water saving technologies	\$50,000 per year
Total estimated additional annual maintenance costs not including maintenance of any new capital developments		\$520,000 per year

This strategic study also reveals and highlights the enormous growth the city is and will continue to enjoy. In order to continue to provide adequate active and passive recreational facilities of a standard required of a major regional centre, Council needs to embark upon a staged and prioritised capital investment programme in this area. A suggested priority list of capital works together with estimated costs including ongoing maintenance is detailed in Table 2 below.

It should be noted that the additional annual routine maintenance costs shown in Table 1 above, need to be added to the maintenance yield of the capital projects shown in the table below as they are completed.

TABLE 2

Priority	Project	Estimated initial capital cost	Estimated annual recurrent maintenance
1	Lady Cutler East Soccer Development	\$2,800,000	\$120,000
2	Elizabeth Park Regional Botanic Gardens	\$2,700,000	\$200,000
3	Troy Gully Master Plan implementation	\$2,000,000	\$10,000
4	Synthetic Athletics Track /Canteen & Spectator Facilities	\$1,800,000	\$90,000
5	Amenities for Ovals /Parkland Delroy Park North	\$250,000	\$10,000

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6	BMX & Skating Facilities	\$120,000	\$20,000
7	River Corridor Master Plan implementation including Regand Park	\$9,000,000	\$210,000
8	Two new amenity blocks in the River Corridor	\$350,000	\$20,000
9	Implementation of the Victoria Park Master Plan	\$500,000	\$100,000
10	Sealed Carpark at Apex oval	\$320,000	\$10,000
11	Sports Field Development Jiora Road	\$2,000,000	\$40,000
Totals		\$21,840,000	\$830,000

In order to provide a benchmark against which any proposed capital investment programme can be compared, it is assumed that the Parks and Landcare capital investment programme since 1994 has been adequate. If this is accepted as the case, then the level of future investment must be at least in the order of the same levels commensurate with growth. The average annual capital expenditure of the Parks and Landcare Division since 1995/96 has been \$660,311 per year. This includes land purchases, capital projects and asset renewals and replacements, funded directly by Council and through grants.

Within this framework the prioritised capital investment programme shown above can be staged over a number of years.

Council's Urban Development Strategy, Future Directions & Structure plan, 1996, adopts "250 dwelling completions per year as a useful nominal growth rate for projecting residential development capacity against a time frame."

As detailed in section 5.3 of this study the Section 94 Open Space Contributions Plan was adopted in 1999 and now provides reasonable levels of contributions from subdivisions as they come on line. The projected growth in housing subdivision over the next ten years to 2015 and based on an average of 2 persons per new dwelling, is expected to yield cash, land and in kind embellishment works in the vicinity of the figures shown in Table 3 below.

TABLE 3

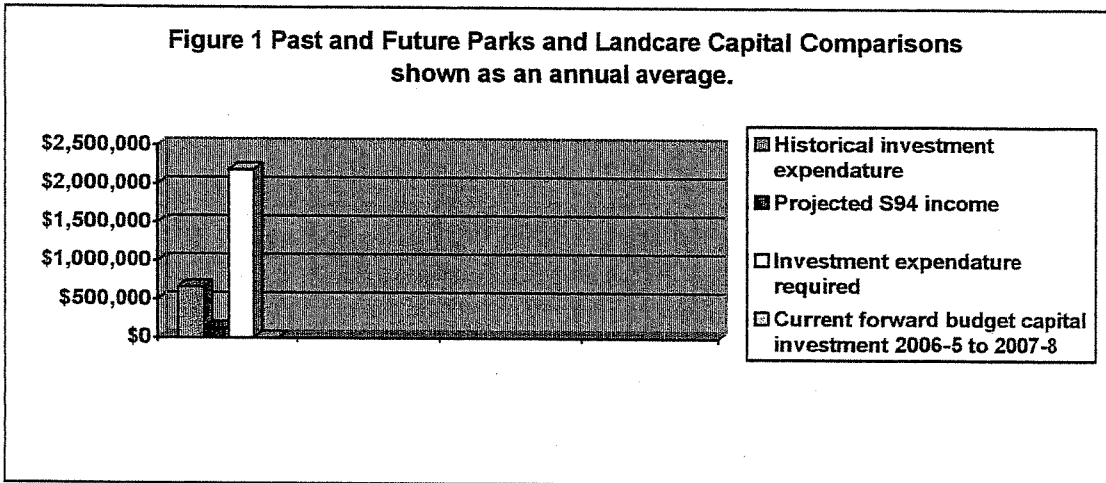
Expected returns from Section 94 Open Space Contributions for the 10 years 2005-2015. Assuming 2500 new dwellings with an average occupancy of 2 persons.					
City wide acquisition	District acquisition	Local acquisition	City wide embellishment	District embellishment	Local embellishment
\$231,000	\$3,298,750	20,000 M ² of parkland	\$404,900	\$1,260,350	Likely to be in kind works
Total \$3,529,000			Total \$1,665,250		

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From Table 3 above it can be seen that there is expected to be a total of \$3,529,000 available for acquisition of land for citywide and district parkland over the next 10 years. When the loan for the purchase of Regand Park is repaid to the Land Development Function, funds would be available for further strategic land acquisitions. It can also be seen, that there is expected to be \$1,665,250 available for capital works over the next 10 years.

It must be clearly understood that these funds can only be expended in accordance with the plan. That is for acquisition and embellishment of public open space, not on recurrent maintenance costs.

The relationships between the historical (past 10 years, shown as an annual average for one year) capital investment, the expected Section 94 Plan income which will be available for capital investment over the next 10 years (shown as an annual average for one year) and the level of investment required (shown as an annual average for one year) to implement the proposed capital works programme over the next 10 years, as per Table 2, are shown in the graph below.



It should be noted that the current Parks and Landcare Services Division's forward budgets 2005-06 through to 2007-08 contain no provision for new capital works.

From table one above it is clear that owing to the expected increase (191%) in the area of high quality open space to be managed by the Parks and Landcare Services Division over the next five years, (see section 3.1 for details) and the ageing of existing infrastructure, there is an urgent need to increase the maintenance capability of the Parks and Landcare Services Division by an average of \$520,000 per year for the 10 years 2005-06 to 2014-15.

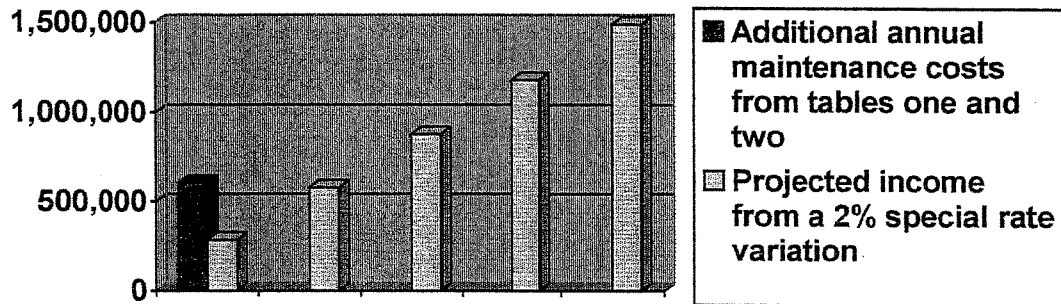
From table two, the proposed capital investment programme, it can be seen that as it is fully implemented these new assets will yield maintenance costs totalling \$830,000 per year. Assuming a 10-year implementation programme these costs would be an average of \$83,000 per year.

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A 2% special rate variation would yield approximately \$280,000 in the first year increasing annually for five years to \$1,487,976 by 2009-2010

This combined average increase of \$603,000 per year for asset maintenance, while critical, is not a huge amount. It can be seen from Figure 2 below that if a special 2% rate variation was implemented each year for five years, that by year three (2007 – 2008) sufficient additional funds would be generated to enable maintenance standards to be improved and / or some additional capital investment over and above Section 94 funding to be made.

Figure 2 Showing the projected increase in maintenance costs (as an annual average) compared to projected income from a 2% special rate variation over 5 years.



3 Overview and key findings.

3.1 Introduction

Parks play a vital role in the life of Dubbo residents and visitors. They provide opportunities for interacting with our families and the wider community, while also being the ideal setting for many forms of recreation, relaxation and contemplation. Parks add beauty to our City, help protect and preserve our natural environment as well as attracting people to visit our City. Dubbo is fortunate in that Council has adopted an equitable and adequate Section 94 Open Space Contributions Plan and a Strategic Plan for the location of public open space throughout the city. Both the Section 94 Contributions Plan and the Recreation Areas Strategy are relatively new and are considered to be important tools for managing the acquisition and development of the city's green spaces over time. In the current cycle of development occurring in the city, the value of these plans cannot be underestimated. They are both considered to be adequate and appropriate at this time. The total area of land currently under the control of the Parks and Landcare Division amounts to 821 hectares, of this there are 71.9ha of highly developed and high maintenance facilities. This is expected to grow significantly in terms of high maintenance parks in the vicinity of an additional 138 hectares over the next five years to 2009. This represents a 191% increase in this type of parkland and accordingly requires a massive increase in resource requirements to properly care for these high maintenance facilities. By 2009 there is also likely to be an additional 230 ha of rural parkland to be managed. See Figure 3 below for a graphical representation of Parks and Landcare Services staff numbers compared to hectares maintained:-

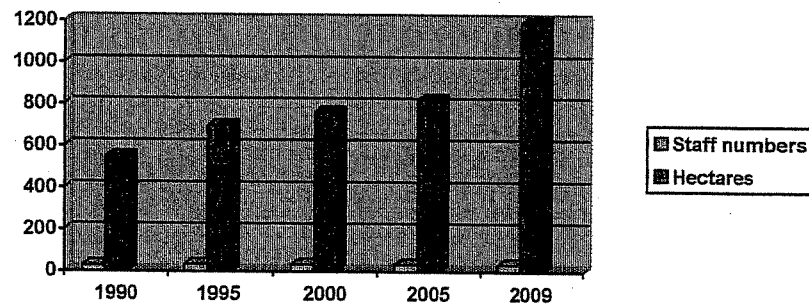


Figure 3 - Comparison of staffing levels with increase in area.

The major trends which are impacting on the provision and management of the City's network of open space areas include growing population and the new subdivisions, ageing populations, the increasing community expectations regarding the provision of open space and the natural environment in general. Parks play a critical role in

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developing a more active community. Physical inactivity is now identified as the second largest cause of disease in Australia and has recently received special funding from the Federal Government targeting children in particular. While it is necessary for a whole of government approach to this problem local government has a key role to play in ensuring that supportive environments are available to promote physical activity and social interaction. This clearly places our parks and sporting fields as one of the most vital of community assets.

The preparation of this strategic study has given the Parks and Landcare Division the opportunity to undertake a critical review of itself to ensure that its Goals, Objectives and Vision Statement are still aligned with those of the greater organisation. As identified in the Corporate Strategic Plan 2004/2005 Dubbo City Councils vision for Dubbo is:-

“The vibrant City on the Plains meeting service and lifestyle needs.”

In support of this vision the Parks and Landcare Services objective is:-

“To ensure that Dubbo residents and visitors have the opportunity to participate in a diverse range of sporting and passive recreational pursuits and to provide landcare services for the rehabilitation and protection of the urban and rural environment and to promote biodiversity in a cost effective and efficient manner.”

Within this context the Parks and Landcare Services Division Vision for Dubbo is:-

- A place where travellers aim to stop to enjoy the sense of place and ambience created through the development and maintenance of the City’s parks, gardens and open spaces.
- A place, which people will choose ahead of the eastern seaboard when they decide on their “sea change” in life.
- A place where residents choose to spend much of their spare time outdoors enjoying the active and passive recreational opportunities available in the city’s parks, gardens and reserves.
- A place where residents take pride and pleasure in their intellectual, material and physical input to the development and management of the city’s public open spaces.
- A place whose name is synonymous with fantastic.

To achieve this the Parks and Landcare Services Division will deliver excellence in the provision, maintenance, development and management of the city’s open space assets whilst providing an integrated open space system, promoting the virtues of natural resource management and providing a diverse range of active and passive recreational opportunities.

To enable the Parks and Landcare Services Division to meet its obligations, it is essential that we forecast the likely future needs and trends of Dubbo in terms of the wide range of disciplines contained within the principal activity definition for the

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Division. It is also necessary to identify what limitations are placed on the Division that have the potential to reduce its effectiveness in the future. These are the key underlying drivers of this Strategic Study.

The development, protection and enhancement of the city's horticultural, arboricultural, sporting facilities and landcare condition, must be of the highest priority. Integrated management provides for the links between people and their communities that extend, through their lifestyles, to the natural and physical world around them. Within the framework provided by the sustainable management of resources, people and communities need to provide for their well-being, health and safety. The concepts of health and safety, social, cultural and economic well being are not distinct but interconnected, forming an overall framework that may be summed up as human well being.

The health of communities is linked to, and ultimately dependent upon, the health of the environment, which is the basis for all aspects of well-being.

As Dubbo's population increases it can be expected that the demands on natural and physical resources will also increase, both by those who want to actively use resources, and those who want to protect certain resource values. For example, more people relates to increased demand on water for energy production, irrigation and domestic/industrial consumption, but also more people who value rivers for ecological or recreational reasons.

The demands placed on the environment have intensified as society has become more complex. Many aspects of social well-being are centred on the use of natural and physical resources, these include recreation and for learning about and from, the natural world.

The strong relationship between people and communities and the natural environment indicates that promoting sustainable management of resources is an important first step in enabling people to provide for their social, economic and cultural well being and for their health and safety.

Dubbo City Council's responsibility for these issues does not stop at the Local Government boundary. Every opportunity which arises that can assist Council in fulfilling its obligations in this regard must be seized. Opportunities arise through good leadership, wide and meaningful consultation, sound strategic planning and sensible and sensitive policy. This requires that Council continue to have an adequate (as a minimum) professional and qualified core capability, both at the operational and strategic level, in the disciplines related to horticulture, arboriculture, sporting facilities and landcare.

It is obvious therefore, that in order to ensure the continuing development, protection and enhancement of the City's horticulture, arboriculture, sporting facilities and landcare condition, Council must not simply maintain its Parks and Landcare Services Division, but must by some means substantially increase the resources allocated to it. Otherwise the consequences for the social, environmental and economic condition of the City will be such that we will have clearly failed in our obligation to the community.

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3.2 Dubbo City's Horticultural/Arboreal/Sporting Facilities and Landcare condition prior to and up to 1995.

In a paper presented at the Dubbo planning seminar in 1985, Mr Jim Coleman of Cameron McNamara Consultants, summed up the physical environment of Dubbo.

"Climate can be described in scientific terms; it is a combination of humidity, temperature, sunshine, rainfall and prevailing winds. Climate has a direct relationship with local flora and fauna and affects the way man behaves and shapes his environment. The kind of buildings we erect and the urban spaces we create are all, at least in theory, influenced by climate. The setting of the City of Dubbo has a beauty all of it's own, partly explained in the special scenic quality, the scale and the vastness of the plains. The setting also includes those intangibles, clean air, clear skies, earth colours and the scattered remnant vegetation which tells its own story of the constant and continuing conflict between the forces of man and nature. Dubbo is a City of the plains. The physical setting in which the City is located is very much a determinant of the urban environmental character of Dubbo".¹

While not always at the forefront in the City's affairs, environmental planning and management has, in the past, managed to generate diverse and strongly held opinions. The community, Councillors and Council staff often held opposing points of view. The heritage and environment studies carried out in 1986/87 "saw a certain amount of friction between some members of Council and staff" *ibid.* These studies were probably the first formal recognition of Council's role in environmental management, particularly in terms of amenity horticulture.

"It is time for the City to embark on a carefully planned programme of greening it's public areas – extending the already significant work being done in the parks and gardens field – and generally aimed at improving the level of comfort, amenity, and attractiveness of those parts of the City which are most used by the people Perhaps there should be a shift in priorities as to where the money is spent". Ibid Apparently these views were not the most popular when expressed in 1985, but according to Marion Dormer (1998) there was a gradual qualified acceptance, which resulted in a more sympathetic Council attitude to preservation of heritage and greening of the City centre.

It is clear however, that the Council's management of its parks and gardens, at least up to 1995, has been a stop, start affair and has always been subordinated to other areas of activity.

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3.3 Initiatives and programmes undertaken post 1995 and up to 2004 and the outcomes of such activities (the present Horticultural/Arboreal/Sporting Facilities and Landcare condition of the City).

In 1994, as part of a major re-structure of the organisation, the Parks and Landcare Services Division was created. Since that time the City's horticultural, arboricultural, landcare and sporting facilities condition have been the focus of the efforts of that Division which has a clear and ambitious vision for the City to be the 'Emerald Oasis' in the middle of New South Wales. In the period 1995 to 2004, the performance, as detailed in this review, of the Parks and Landcare Services Division from its inception in 1995 to the current time has, by any measure been outstanding. The Parks and Landcare Services Division has managed, (with no substantive increase in internally provided resources) the growth in both the quantum of the City's horticultural, arboricultural, landcare and sporting facilities assets, together with a substantial increase in the standards of those assets. By way of illustration, staffing levels within the Division have not changed since 1994, yet the Division now manages (among other things) an additional 66 hectares of parkland, not including the recently purchased 60 hectares of Regand Park.

This has been achieved by the development and implementation of some **43 major projects and initiatives** during this period. These projects and initiatives are generally concerned with:

- Building the community's capacity for self-help and ability to become involved.
- Developing strategic partnerships with government agencies, individuals, interest groups and other Councils.
- Improving the Division's capability and capacity through the application of technology and staff.
- Actively seeking out grants and other **non-rate income, (circa \$3.8M)**.
- Application of a continuous improvement programme anchored in total asset management philosophy.

However in terms of increases in efficiency and effectiveness, within current resource constraints, all of the low hanging fruit has now been harvested. If Dubbo is to continue to benefit from the momentum which exists in terms of overall development and within its Parks and Landcare Services Division, then that Division must be allocated the resources required to continue to manage its ever-expanding responsibilities.

Without this Dubbo will not achieve its vision and will become/remain just another inland regional town.

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3.4 Likely future trends, developments, opportunities, threats and legislation pertaining to the City's Horticultural/Arboreal/Landcare & Sporting facilities condition and capability.

Since 1995, there has been an increasing emphasis placed on natural resource and community land management. Vegetation and water reforms continue to be implemented and salinity has become possibly the nation's biggest economic threat. The Murray Darling Basin Commission and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality continue to be prime drivers, which keep natural resource management on the political radar.

This, together with the growing public demand will ensure that in the area of natural resource management there will be increasing pressures on Council.

Climate change resulting from the enhanced greenhouse effect is no longer hypothetical. Changes in temperature, water availability and CO₂ concentration will directly affect the physiology of most species. In animals, temperature can affect metabolic rate, fecundity, survivorship, sex ratio, length of oestrus, hormone release and parasitic infection rates. In plants an increase in temperature favours C4 (weedy) species so that landscapes may become dominated by a few opportunistic 'weedy' species. Species with high reproductive rates and short generation times will also be advantaged, including parasites and pathogens. Even minor warming, less than one degree will have consequences for both our rural and urban communities.

In recent times, Australia's economy has been one of the strongest in the developed world, with inflation and interest rates at record low levels. Add to this, spiralling real estate prices in the eastern capitals, especially Sydney, and the first homeowners grant, we have a sustained demand for high quality housing estates in Dubbo. This brings with it competition between the land developers to present their products quite differently to the way the Avian and Eastridge estates were presented. Consequently there is a much higher demand for the lifestyle attributes in subdivisions. Good quality open space – integrated – and lots of it. Lots of trees and shade – plenty of space for kids to play and sports grounds not too far from home. The Section 94 Open Space Contributions plan, adopted in 1999, now provides for reasonable open space contributions as opposed to the pre 1999 plan. However this is a double-edged sword, as it provides for acquisition and embellishment of public open space, and rightly so, however it does not and cannot provide for ongoing maintenance costs.

Within the next five years Council is likely to acquire an additional 138 hectares of high quality public open space in the urban area of the City, together with the infrastructure that goes with it. The villages of Wongarbon, Ballimore and Eumungerie will also require more attention and effort.

Given the incredible way in which sport permeates Dubbo's culture, (what other city of this size in Australia can boast of seven first class turf wicket tables?) as the population grows so too will the demand continue to grow for more and better quality sporting facilities. For example the time is fast approaching when Council will be under pressure to provide an Olympic standard tartan surfaced athletics track. The provision of the grandstand at Apex Oval, hosting the NSW Touch Football

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championships for at least the next five years at Lady Cutler Ovals and the 12 hard court tennis complex at Victoria Park will set the standard and truly establish Dubbo as the major regional sporting centre in NSW. This will drive an increasing expectation of higher standards of maintenance of all sporting facilities.

Many of the City's estimated 25,000 street trees and numerous park trees are old and in decline and increasingly under pressure from the construction and reconstruction of civil infrastructure. Often minor physical damage leads to hard to detect biological attack on the physiology of the tree that in turn can lead to an apparently healthy tree literally falling over, potentially with dire consequences. Recent incidences of this happening have been in Wingewarra and Darling Streets. Council currently has no effective tree total asset management system. This must be addressed in the immediate future. In terms of Street Trees, as they are part of the road asset, they are 'owned' by the Civil Infrastructure Function. In order to provide for adequate management of these assets their needs to be a system of standards based maintenance service level specifications developed, adopted and properly resourced. The recently adopted 2% special rate variation for maintenance of the road network could assist in this process.

Land developers, currently very active in Dubbo, are, as part of the presentation of their estates, undertaking quality landscaping and street tree plantings at the time of development. This relieves Council of the task and the initial capital cost, however it should not be overlooked in terms of increasing the City's street and park tree inventory and the ongoing maintenance required.

To keep pace with the growing demands in the areas of natural resource, public open space and recreation facilities management, Council must find ways of formally assigning substantially more resources to this increasingly important area.

3.5 Priorities, Programmes, Policies and Initiatives

Key activities and initiatives that would facilitate the development, enhancement and protection of the city's horticultural, arboreal, landcare and sporting facilities condition include:-

- Enhancement of asset management capability for our street and park trees
- Maximising community benefits of parks through improved strategic planning, park network planning, development and individual park design/re-design
- Redoubling efforts to foster community ownership and involvement through partnerships and other related activities
- Improving the maintenance standards of parks, sporting ovals and reserves.
- Enhancement of the important role the City's parks and recreational assets play in attracting tourism and serving the local community
- Enhancing the management of our natural areas for current and future generations for biodiversity and to provide recreational opportunities
- Encouraging revegetation on private land for habitat and salinity control
- Enhancement of our salinity and ground water mitigation capability

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- Strengthening partnerships with Western Plains Zoo, Catchment Management Authority, Government Agencies and other Local Government Councils in our region
- Continue to act as the Local Control Authority under the provisions of the Noxious Weeds Act.

Policy frameworks that both support and encourage the development of the above must also be introduced with key aspects to include:-

- Develop and adopt a Total Asset Management Strategic Master Plan (text and spatial) for the development, re-development and maintenance management of the City's parks, reserves and sporting facilities. This Master Plan would focus on four areas:
 1. Undertaking a substantial parkland development programme throughout the city.
 2. Transforming the City through an enhanced greening programme.
 3. Transforming the city's streetscapes through a street-planting programme.
 4. Sustainably managing Council's natural areas for the benefit of current and future generations.
 5. Implementing targeted programmes throughout the City to improve the community's sense of social capital.
- Maintain the policy of setting aside the first \$50,000 in any budget surplus specifically for the implementation of the Troy Gully Master Plan.
- Develop and adopt a system of standards based maintenance service level specifications and adequately resource them for the planting and maintenance of the horticultural and arboricultural component of the roads assets.
- Seek to implement a special rate variation specifically to fund the Parks and Landcare maintenance and capital works programmes over time, commencing 2005 – 06.

Specific programme opportunities and issues include:-

- Develop and implement a major Street Tree planting programme. Initially targeting the enhancement of the City entry plantings already in place, then extending to the highways and major roads within the City.
- Develop a Street Tree Inventory, recording species by type, location, age, condition, value and maintenance history. Record electronically and link to Geographic Information System.
- Formalise the 'Friends of. and Adopt-A-Park' programmes.
- Implement the Victoria Park Master Plan.
- Implement the Elizabeth Park Master Plan.
- Implement the River Corridor Master Plan
- Implement the Troy Gully Master Plan.
- Revise the Asset Maintenance Service Level Specifications for all Parks and Landcare assets, up one level.

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- Implement the actions in the Central West Salinity Alliance Action Plan.

The key priorities for the Parks and Landcare Services Division for the period 2004 to 2009 therefore are:-

- To establish a strategic partnership with the Central West Catchment Management Authority and to have the Salinity Alliance Action Plan Funded.
- To develop a Total Asset Management Strategic Master Plan (text and spatial) for the development, re-development and maintenance management of the City's parks, reserves and sporting facilities.
- To obtain adequate resources for the maintenance of the City's horticultural, arboricultural, landcare and sporting facilities assets.
- To obtain adequate resources for the implementation of the Parks and Landcare services capital works programme within a realistic time frame. (See table 2)
- To develop and implement, on behalf of Civil Infrastructure, a major street tree planting and horticultural management programmes.
- To continue to build community and Government partnerships.

Summary of key report findings

- Within the next five years Dubbo city is likely to acquire an additional 138ha. of highly developed urban public open space. This represents an increase of a massive 191% over the current (2004) level of high maintenance facilities.
- There has been no increase in staffing levels within the Parks and Landcare Division since 1994.
- Dubbo is now at a critical point in its growth and development.
- Climate change resulting from the enhanced greenhouse effect is no longer hypothetical. Even minor warming, less than one degree will have consequences for both our urban and rural communities.
- That a formal agreement between the Technical Services Division and the Parks and Landcare Services Division be obtained with appropriate funding provided each year regarding the maintenance of horticultural assets under the ownership of the Technical Services Division to **prescribed standards** by the Parks and Landcare Services Division.
- Dubbo needs to improve its efficiencies in water delivery and utilization.
- The current costs to the Dubbo community of dryland and urban salinity is estimated by Dr. Susan Wilson to be \$7,400,000 per year.
- Dr. Wilson also estimates the cost of salinity impacts on Dubbo's urban and rural road network alone is approximately \$164,660 per annum.
- Promoting sustainable management of resources is an important first step in enabling people to provide for their social, economic and cultural wellbeing and for their health and safety.
- The 'IT Revolution' of the 1990's and the 'Biotech Revolution of the early 2000's showed how quickly the world can change. The Sustainable Development, 'SD Revolution' of the 2010's should come as no surprise, even though the changes will be as significant.
- If we can maximise for our communities their levels of social capital and at the same time minimise the barriers to volunteering, we can expect to generate greater levels of community involvement in our programmes.
- Changes to catchment management and native vegetation management announced in 2003 will dramatically change the face of natural resource management on both public and private land across NSW.
- The next five years has the potential for the Parks and Landcare Services Division to build on the momentum of the many programmes and initiatives it has put in place.
- Section 94 open space contributions are restricted to the provision and embellishment of public open space and cannot be used for maintenance.
- Without an increase in resources for Parks and Landcare Services, the community will need to accept lower standards of maintenance of the parks, sporting fields and reserves estate.
- Without an expansion of current resources future planned developments become a threat.

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- The Parks and Landcare Services Division have largely reached the limit in productivity gains within the current workforce and technical constraints.
- The creation of the Parks and Landcare Services Division in 1994 has proven to be a key strategic decision, which has resulted in exponential improvement in the city's horticultural, landcare, arboriculture and sporting facilities condition.

4 Recommendations

1. That the information in this Strategic Study be noted.
2. That a Total Asset Management Strategic Master Plan (text and spatial) for the development, re-development and maintenance management of the City's parks, reserves and sporting facilities which focuses on the following five areas:
 - a. Undertaking a substantial parkland development programme throughout the city.
 - b. Transforming the City through an enhanced greening programme
 - c. Transforming Dubbo's streetscape by developing a street-planting programme
 - d. Sustainably managing Council's natural areas for the benefit of current and future generations.
 - e. Implementing targeted programmes throughout the City to improve the community's sense of social capital.

be developed and then considered by Council.

3. That Council maintain the policy of setting aside the first \$50,000 in any budget surplus specifically for the implementation of the Troy Gully Master Plan.
4. That Council adopt and appropriately fund a policy of maintaining all horticultural assets under Councils control to a specified standard.
5. That Council seek to implement a specific special rate variation of 2% per year for five (5) years to specifically fund the Parks and Landcare capital and operational programmes as set out in Table 2 commencing 2005 – 06.