

## 8 QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE FROM COUNCILLORS

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## 9 QUESTIONS ON NOTICE FROM COUNCILLORS

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### 9.1 Community Hub

At the Council meeting on 25 November 2019, **Cr Wass** asked the following question without notice to the General Manager, with a response that the question would be taken on notice:

*I thank Mr Smee for his response to my question on page 4 but maybe I wasn't clear enough. I wanted the month by month figures and that is the amount earned and not necessarily the amount of payment received. Could I please have those figures?*

#### **Officer's Response:**

The monthly breakdown of income for the Community Hub is as follows:

May	\$4,000
June	\$536
July	\$714
August	\$1,227
September	\$959
October	\$2,096

*Daniel Smee - Executive Manager Governance & Community Services*

### 9.2 Environmental Offset Fund

At the Council meeting on 25 November 2019, **Cr Cordover** asked the following question without notice to the General Manager, with a response that the question would be taken on notice:

*Our Biodiversity Offset policy says that financial offsets are calculated at a rate of up to \$500 per tree of very high conservation value up to \$250 for high conservation value trees. Why were these rates set to only \$500 and have we considered adopting the City of Melbourne tree valuation tool or the itree valuation tool or the carbon accounting model tool which significantly increased the value of each of these high conservation value trees?*

*In terms of the time scale that we are talking about with planting trees from environmental offset value, has consideration been put into the fact that some of these very high conservation value trees that are being destroyed are well over 100 years old sometimes maybe 200 years old and does the time scale for this Environmental Offset Policy taken into account that we are denying many future generations trees because they are being destroyed.*

**Officer's Response:**

Biodiversity offsets are used by Council to compensate for the loss of trees of high conservation value when options to avoid these impacts have been exhausted and it is still considered desirable for other economic or social reasons for the trees to be removed. The Biodiversity Offset Policy is not used as a means of justifying biodiversity loss, rather as a means to generate a positive gain from an inevitable loss. Indirect offsets (financial contributions) are acceptable where the losses are small and it can be demonstrated that there will be a more significant and strategic conservation outcome by pooling the funds, as has been done through the Kingborough Environmental Fund.

The offset rates were reviewed in 2016 as part of a general review of the Biodiversity Offset Policy. No changes were proposed for the per tree offset rate of up to \$500/tree of high conservation value. The rate was historically set on an estimate of the cost of replacing the tree, based on the theory of a 5:1 ratio. That is, where five seedlings are planted and maintained, it is likely that at least one of these will make it to maturity.

The City of Melbourne tree valuation model is based on placing a financial value on the many benefits of a tree, some of which are irreplaceable in our lifetime. Council's current approach is much more simplistic in the way that a single rate is applied to most high conservation trees despite differences in species, size, location, age, health and so on. So whilst a single rate does not reflect a valid economic value of the tree, or factor in the time it would take for the offset plantings to mature and fulfil the same function as the trees removed, it does provide a reasonable, practical and consistent approach for the community. It simply reflects the cost of replacing and maintaining a similar tree to maturity.

There may be merit in reviewing these rates and investigating alternative tree valuation tools, particularly where the trees are performing multiple functions, including carbon sequestration, contribution to vegetation corridors and visual landscapes and amenity such as shade and wind protection. However this review would need to factor in the different contributions of trees in different landscapes.

In summary, tree valuation tools are incredibly useful as they identify and place a financial value on the many social, economic and environmental values that trees generate. This allows trees to be considered on a more even footing with other assets in cost benefit analyses. The application of these methods to determine the offset rate for each high conservation tree removed on private land would however add to the financial impact of the scheme on the community.

*Jon Doole – Manager Environmental Services*

### **9.3 Water Supply Stickers**

At the Council meeting on 25 November 2019, **Cr Cordover** asked the following question without notice to the General Manager, with a response that the question would be taken on notice:

*A firefighter explained how helpful it was for residents to display a Tasmanian fire service water supply sign on their water tank. These signs are big white signs with a 'W' on them with a red background and they identify for firefighters the water points so that when firefighters arrive on a property they can quickly connect to a water source and appropriate coupling. Since 90% of homes in Kingborough are at bushfire risk, is it possible to send these water supply signs out to residents for free with their rates notices?*

### **Officer's Response:**

The Tasmania Fire Service (TFS) has an approved standard sign which is intended to be used to indicate the location of a static water supply on private property for firefighting purposes as shown.

Static water supplies are supplies that are independent from the mains water supply system such as swimming pools, tanks and dams. Static water supplies may be vital sources of water for firefighters, especially in areas where reticulated or 'town water' systems are not available.

The 'W' sign is also used to identify which tank on a property is specifically set aside for firefighting use as opposed to tanks which are used for drinking water. It is necessary to make this distinction because when firefighting hoses are connected to drinking water tanks there is a high chance the tank will become contaminated with firefighting foam residue which will render that water unsafe for drinking.



*An example of how the water tank sign should be placed*

Recent changes to the building in bushfire prone areas legislation require that firefighting water supplies are identified in new buildings with the 'W' sign. There is no requirement for existing houses to retrofit this 'W' sign.

The standard 'W' signs are not intended to be used as a general sign on the front of properties to indicate the presence of a static water supply to passing brigades.

Programs to identify properties with static water supply do exist in other states (for example the NSW Rural Fire Service has Static Water Supply program that supplies free *Static Water Supply* signs for display on property boundaries so that they can be seen from the road by fire crews in an emergency). Whilst the placement of such signs on front fences does assist brigades in triaging properties during bushfire emergencies, the TFS does not currently have a program to identify and mark existing houses with water supply signs installed on property frontages.

Apart from the issue of funding such a program it is not as simple as allowing interested property owners to erect the signs. The signs should only be used where the location of the water supply meets the *TFS Guidelines for Firefighting Water Supplies*. The guidelines are necessary to ensure that water supplies are adequate, accessible and reliable. (For example, the guidelines stipulate a minimum amount of water that must be available (10000L) and take into account requirements for fire truck clearances, turning bay widths and maximum hose length distance).

To avoid the installation of 'W' signs in locations which may not be suitable, the distribution of 'W' signs would need to be accompanied by a fact sheet that outlines the minimum requirements of TFS.

The cost associated with purchasing the 'W' signs is currently \$33 per sign (if supplied by Tas Fire Equipment). The Bushfire Program is currently not funded to offer this service. In addition the specific criteria required by The Tasmania Fire Service Guidelines to correctly apply the signs means the Fire Service are best placed to administer any such program.

*Jon Doole – Manager Environmental Services*

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