

## Media Release

**Tuesday 11 April, 2017**

### **Flush for funds with loan to improve amenities**

Public toilets in at least 16 locations across the Region will undergo much-needed improvements after Tamworth Regional Councillors tonight decided to borrow \$1.5 million to undertake the work.

The move came after they considered a report which revealed 16 high profile or significant public amenity assets are in need of urgent renewal after being rated as being in poor condition.

Tamworth Region Mayor Col Murray said it made good business sense to take out a loan to ensure the necessary improvements are made sooner rather than later to public amenities throughout the Region.

“Our residents as well as visitors will appreciate this outcome,” he said. “A lack of well maintained public amenities buildings or the provision of poor quality facilities has the potential to generate adverse public opinion, particularly from visitors to the Region.

“With interest rates at relatively low levels, there is a strong business case supporting this move – at a rate of 4 per cent the \$1.5M loan could be repaid over 15 years at \$133,950 a year.”

Councillors voted in support of a recommendation to take out a \$1.5 million external loan to fund the works and repay the debt over 15 years using \$50,000 from the Special Rate Variation Reserve for Buildings and the Asset Renewal Reserve for Public Amenities (estimated at \$83,950 a year, depending on interest rates).

They also agreed that where a public amenities building in need of replacement is located close to a service station, convenience shop or similar, Council Properties Division staff are to discuss the possibility of entering an agreement with the business owner to open those facilities to the public. The report to Council proposes that a suitable arrangement would be for Council to pay for an upgrade to an amenities block associated with a business provided that the business owner allows members of the public to use the facilities and they are maintained by the business owner to an appropriate standard.

The 16 public amenities proposed to be replaced as a priority are (in alphabetical order): Attunga Rest Area, Barraba Lions Park, Barraba Rotary Park, Hyman Road Safety Park at South Tamworth, Manilla Rotary Park, Tamworth Marsupial Park, Moonbi Chook Park, Moonbi Lookout, Jenkins Street in Nundle, Sheba Dam at Hanging Rock, Tamworth ANZAC Park, Tamworth Bicentennial Park, Tamworth Cemetery, Tamworth Oxley Lookout and Tamworth Viaduct Park.

The report said Council intends to provide one unisex amenities block at Oxley Lookout to replace the current separate blocks of ladies’ toilets and men’s toilets.

It is revealed in the report how Council is also working on five separate grants applications which could be used to renew existing facilities on Crown Land which, if successful, would boost the total available funds to improve public amenities. These grants require Council to fund half the cost of proposed projects.

Council is also seeking a grant to cover the complete cost of a new amenities building on Crown Land in Victoria Park, Tamworth, which would benefit Tamworth Miniature Railway, Tamworth Region Botanic Garden and the Tamworth Regional Astronomy Club.

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It is expected Council will call for tenders to supply and construct the 16 new public amenities buildings early in the new financial year. Construction of the new amenities will be scheduled to be completed by the end of the 2017/18 financial year.

Tamworth Regional Council's Public Amenities Asset Management Plan was completed on 31 January this year. It identifies 91 public amenities buildings owned and managed by Council which are in parks and reserves, roadside rest areas and adjacent to sporting facilities.

The Region's amenities buildings are estimated to have a total replacement value of \$12.6 million with an average individual asset value of \$138,000.

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