

12.3 MINUTES - TUMUT AERODROME COMMITTEE - 13 MAY 2025 - ATTACHMENTS

Attachment Titles:

1. Minutes - Tumut Aerodrome Committee - 13 May 2025

Attachment 1 - Minutes - Tumut Aerodrome Committee - 13 May 2025



Notice of Meeting

TUMUT AERODROME COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 13 May 2025 at 4:00 PM
Riverina Room, 76 Capper Street Tumut

MINUTES

1. COMMENCING AT:.....2

2. PRESENT:2

3. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY2

4. APOLOGIES:.....2

5. DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTEREST:2

6. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:4

 6.1. MINUTES - TUMUT AERODROME COMMITTEE - 11 FEBRUARY 20254

7. BUSINESS ARISING:.....4

8. AGENDA ITEMS:9

 8.1. MATTERS - TUMUT AERODROME COMMITTEE - 13 MAY 2025.....9

9. GENERAL BUSINESS:9

10. NEXT MEETING11

1. COMMENCING AT:

4.00pm

2. PRESENT:

Cr John Larter (Councillor Delegate), Fred Kell, Bridget Ryan, Craig Cullinger, Peter Wilson, John Gregory (RFS), Tom Moxey, Tony Clee (President Tumut Aero Club & TROE) and Glenyce Francis (Via Teams video link).

Duncan Mitchell - Director Infrastructure & Works (Council Delegate).

Observers: Mayor Julia Ham, Cr Grant Hardwick (Alt. Delegate), Jim Ryan, Tim Gallard and Anna Gallard.

3. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

An acknowledgement of the traditional custodians of the land was delivered by Duncan Mitchell - Director.

4. APOLOGIES:

Apologies – No Apologies were received.

5. DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTEREST:

Pecuniary / Non-Pecuniary Interests Forms were issued at the meeting. Duncan Mitchell - Director Infrastructure & Works (Council Delegate) explained what the purpose of the Pecuniary / Non-Pecuniary Interests Forms were.

Duncan Mitchell - Director Infrastructure & Works explained that Pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests' forms are used to ensure transparency and prevent conflicts of interest in situations where individuals are involved in decision-making or have influence over a matter.

The Director explained that the forms require individuals to disclose any interests, financial or otherwise, that could potentially impact their impartiality or create a conflict of interest.

The Director explained that **Pecuniary** interests are financial interests, including potential, perceived, or actual financial gain or loss. The example he gave is that if you are operating a business out at the aerodrome and you sit on this committee and you are involved in decision making that may directly benefit your business – you probably have a Pecuniary (Financial Interest) and therefore a conflict of interest and you should declare that interest and **not** participate in the decision making relating to that item or matter.

The Director explained that a **non-pecuniary** conflict of interest is a situation where a person's private or personal interests, other than financial ones, could potentially influence their judgment or decisions in a committee matter. This means there's no financial gain or loss directly involved, but a personal interest, like a relationship, could create bias.

The example he gave is that if you own a property next to the aerodrome or lease a hanger from Council out at the aerodrome and you sit on this committee and you are involved in decision making on a matter relating to the aerodrome - you probably have a Non- Pecuniary (Private / Personal Interest) and therefore there could be a real or perceived conflict of interest. In this instance you should declare that interest and **not** participate in the decision making relating to that committee item or matter.

The Director explained there are different levels of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary interests – such as significant – non-significant.

Differences between levels of Non-Pecuniary and Pecuniary Interests:**Non- Pecuniary Interests**

A “*significant non-pecuniary*” conflict is one that a reasonable person would perceive as influencing a decision or action. A non-significant non-pecuniary conflict is one that a reasonable person would not perceive as influencing a decision or action.

Examples:

- **Close relationships:** A close personal or business relationship with a person who will be affected by a decision could lead to bias.
- **Strong affiliations:** Affiliation with an organization that will be affected by a decision could also create a conflict.
- **Personal benefits:** If a decision could lead to a personal benefit, even if not financial, it could be considered a significant non-pecuniary conflict.
- **Conflict of duties:** Being a member of a board or committee as a council representative and having conflicting interests between the council and the organization, can create a significant non-pecuniary conflict.

Significance

The “significant” part means that the conflict is substantial enough to require specific management or disclosure, as outlined in Councils code of conduct and the term of Reference of the Committee, hence a Pecuniary / Non-Pecuniary declaration form was provided at the meeting and the standing agenda item (No 5) for the Aerodrome Committee Meetings is “*Declaration of Pecuniary Interest*”.

Examples of significant non-pecuniary conflicts:

- A council member who is a close friend of a person who is applying for a permit or hanger lease could be perceived as having a conflict of interest when deciding whether to grant the lease or permit, even if there is no financial gain involved.

A council member who is also a member of the board, club of a local community organization could have a conflict of interest if the council is considering a decision that could impact the particular organisation, even if there is no financial gain involved.

Pecuniary Interests

A “*significant pecuniary*” conflict of interest is one where there's a substantial or considerable financial gain or loss for the individual or related parties involved in a decision or action. This means there's a strong likelihood of a financial interest being directly affected by the matter.

These are financial interests that could be affected by a decision or action of the committee, such as owning property, holding shares in a business at the aerodrome, or having a position in a company or Business out at the aerodrome that might be impacted by a committee or council decision.

For a conflict to be considered significant, the financial interest must be substantial. It's not just about any small financial benefit or loss, but a real possibility of a significant impact.

Disclosing and managing Interests:

If a significant pecuniary conflict of interest is identified, the person involved must disclose it and ensure they are removed from the decision-making process from the committee to avoid any appearance of bias or unfair influence.

Note: After quite a lengthy discussion amongst the committee about Pecuniary Interest it was noted that most committee members have a pecuniary interest one way or the other.

It should also be noted that Committee members don't choose to be members of the Committee to fetter a direct financial or non-financial benefit – they choose to be Committee members because they are genuinely interested and passionate about the Tumut aerodrome. Members are not seeking benefit via their affiliation with the committee – that is not the intent of their membership. Through circumstances that are unavoidable and completely understandable the members of the committee are users of the aerodrome – neighbours (Property owners) adjacent to the aerodrome and or business operators at the aerodrome. If it wasn't for their passion or membership, then its highly likely the committee wouldn't exist.

The purpose of the explanation of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest at this committee meeting was to simply raise the matter and provide some clarity around the issue. Committee members now have an understanding of Pecuniary and non-Pecuniary Interest if they didn't have one beforehand and there is always the opportunity to declare an interest if they feel inclined to do so as per this standing item on the agenda and forms provided.

6. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:

6.1. MINUTES - TUMUT AERODROME COMMITTEE - 11 FEBRUARY 2025

TAC.03/25 RESOLVED:

THAT:

The Minutes of the Tumut Aerodrome Committee meeting held on 11 February 2025 be received.

ALL CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

7. BUSINESS ARISING:

The following updates from the minutes were discussed at the meeting:

Update on the Aerodrome Upgrade Project – Option 3 – adopted by Council – December 2023 -

Council's Director of Infrastructure and Works provided an update to the committee including the below points:

1. Construction Works - Update

The Director informed Construction works at the aerodrome are progressing well with the main runway and apron grading works now almost complete. All drainage works in and around the runways and taxiways are now complete.

Council has let a fencing contract to "Big Ben Fencing" to undertake all of the perimeter fencing around the aerodrome which is part of the scope of works identified in the funding grant.

Council has also let the runway and taxiway lighting contract to "Avionics Limited" to undertake all lighting works in accordance with the required CASA standards.

The Director informed the Committee that the sealing of the runway, taxiways and aprons will be undertaken towards the end of June. This will be a temporary finish (seal) which will allow the runway to be operational during winter. The final seal will need to be applied in September / October when the average ambient temperature during the day is above 20 degrees. This will mean that the aerodrome will be closed for 1-2 weeks while the final seal is applied.

The Director informed the Committee that overall, the upgrade works are now 75% complete and that Council's contractor (Snowy Valleys Council IWD Department) had been very lucky with the weather. Due to the dry conditions no weather delays to the works had been experienced all through the months of February right up to May. The region has had the driest Autumn on record and is currently at Level 1 water restrictions.

Committee member comments

Committee members agreed that Council had been very fortunate with the prevailing dry weather conditions.

The Mayor commented that farmers would desperately love rain!

Glenyce Francis raised an issue that the construction works are having an impact on “Blundells Dam” – will the civil drainage works have a permanent impact upon water going into this dam because it's an important habitat / ecosystem.

- Councils' Director of Infrastructure and Works took this question on notice and will raise the matter with the Project Manager.

Committee members raised that Council had to improve its communications on the building phase of the project, now that works were well underway there were build design features appearing on the ground that the Committee members say they were not aware of.

- Councils' Director of Infrastructure and Works took this question on notice and will raise the matter of communications with the Project Manager.

The Director stated that it's not unusual in a project delivery cycle that once things are being built on site and are “coming out of the ground” that more questions from stakeholders get raised. Council will have to improve its notifications to all stakeholders during the construction phase. Councils' Director of Infrastructure and Works has already raised this matter with the Project Manager.

Construction shots 3 May 2025:

Image 1:



Image 2:



Image 3:



2. Land Acquisitions

Councils' Director of Infrastructure and Works confirmed that Council has finalised the land acquisition for the windsock area and the Southern parallel taxiway area.

No comments from the Committee

3. Communications – CASA and Notams

Councils' Director of Infrastructure and Works informed the Committee that Council continues to communicate with CASA on the finalisation of the MAT (Manual of Air Traffic Services) for the Aerodrome which will be completed by end of June. Notams (Notice to Airmen – Notice to Air Missions) are also prepared as required for Air Services Australia.

No comments from the Committee

4. New RFS Fire Control Centre - Tumut Aerodrome

Councils' Director of Infrastructure and Works informed the Committee that it is understood that the time frame for new proposed RFS Fire Control Centre at Tumut Aerodrome has been pushed out to future financial years. This has not been formally confirmed in writing to Council who signed a Heads of Agreement dated 25 March 2024 to provide land at Tumut Aerodrome for the RFS to construct the Fire control Centre. The Heads of Agreement has not been fully executed as Forestry Corp NSW are a signatory to the document and have not signed as yet.

It is understood but not confirmed in writing to Council that Forestry Corp have decided not to move out to Tumut Aerodrome and occupy the new Fire Control Centre as intended in the Heads of Agreement.

No comments from the Committee

5. Softwoods Working Group - Plantations Fire Protection Fund

Refer to Attachment - Email - RFS - Jon Gregory to SVC 12 May 2025 - Clarifications-Directors Report-Tumut Aerodrome Committee 13 May 2025.

This email from Jon Gregory - RFS provides clarification around the Softwoods Working Group – Plantations Fire Protection Fund and the proposed new Hangar at Tumut Aerodrome.

Committee member comments

There was a lot of discussion by the Committee about the proposed new Hangar and components of the \$3,850,000 grant funding for the new facility.

After significant discussion on this matter, the committee agreed and resolved to call an Extraordinary meeting of the Committee, and invite both the RFS and members of the Softwoods Working Group to address the committee and answer questions on the proposed new Hangar facility.

6. Extraordinary meeting of the Tumut Aerodrome committee

Due to the significant amount of discussion by the Committee about the \$3,850,000 grant for the new Hangar it was agreed and resolved by the committee to call an Extraordinary meeting and invite both the RFS and members of the Softwoods Working Group to address the committee and answer questions on the proposed new Hangar facility.

Note: The report and minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of the Tumut Aerodrome Committee held on 27 May 2025 are the subject of a separate report.

7. Resolution of Council of 11 February Meeting

Council has received representations from True North Helicopters who operate a business out of Tumut Aerodrome and provide firefighting and emergency response services to the RFS under contract. As a result of these representations a resolution from the Council was made at the 11 February 2025 meeting.

The resolution is below:

12.3 MINUTES - TUMUT AERODROME COMMITTEE - 11 FEBRUARY 2025

M67/25 RESOLVED:

THAT COUNCIL:

1. Note the minutes of the Tumut Aerodrome Committee held on 11 February 2025; and
2. Adopt the following recommendation/s from the minutes:

2a. Approve the re-nomination from Glenyce Francis, Fred Kell, Graham Smith, Bridget Ryan, Peter Wilson, and Tony Clee to the Tumut Aerodrome Committee.

3. In relation to the use of Council land at the Tumut Aerodrome for the purpose of a hangar development, write to the Commissioner of Rural Fire Service Mr Rob Rogers and request a response in accordance with NSW policy statement on the Application of Competitive Neutrality (TPP 02-1) from NSW Treasury with respect to the possible misuse of market power and operations that would be considered in breach of policy statement on the application of Competitive Neutrality and Competition and Consumer Act 2010, section 46 Misuse of market power.

Cr Larter/Cr Sheldon

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Council is not privy to the contract between True North Helicopters and the RFS but has now, as per the resolution of Council, written to the Commissioner of the RFS – Rob Rogers on 30 April 2025.

To date no response has been received.

Comments from the Committee

Cr Larter commented that he was seeking further clarification from Tara Moriarty - the Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales on the possible misuse of market power as per the resolution of Council.

8. Financial Sustainability Workshop

Council is still to organise a date to hold a workshop with Committee members and all other Aerodrome stakeholders to discuss potential financial sustainability strategies for the Aerodrome which currently runs at a significant loss for Council each year. This was a resolution from the June 2024 Council meeting.

Comments from the Committee

General comments from the Committee were that once the upgrade is complete it is critical to hold a workshop to consider the financial viability of the Aerodrome.

9. Request for Radio Frequency to be changed at Tumut Aerodrome

Council is continuing to investigate how to change the radio frequency at the Aerodrome which has proving to be very difficult. Councils' Director of Infrastructure and Works has written to the ACMA (Australian Communications and Media Authority) in February 2025 and the email response is below:

From: ACMA Customer Service Centre <info@acma.gov.au>

Sent: Monday, 17 February 2025 12:39 PM

To: Duncan Mitchell <

Subject: [SEC=OFFICIAL] RE: Request to change an aeronautical radio frequency - Snowy Valleys Council -

Tumut Aerodrome [Ref: CSC2025-3146] CRM:001369020551

Hello Duncan

Thank you for your enquiry regarding an assigned apparatus licence application.

To apply for a new licence, or request a variation for your existing assigned apparatus licence, we recommend you contact an accredited person (AP), who can help you with your application. Find an [AP here?](#)

Fee-exempt applicants can apply direct to the ACMA, as well as applicants who have contacted multiple APs who were unable to undertake the work (you may be required to show evidence of this).

For additional information, please visit: [Aeronautical licence | ACMA](#)

Kind regards

Stephanie

Enquiries Officer

Customer Service Centre

Telephone: 1300 850 115

Email: info@acma.gov.au

Councils' Director of Infrastructure and Works updated the committee on just how difficult it is to have a radio frequency changed.

No comments from the Committee

8. AGENDA ITEMS:

8.1. MATTERS - TUMUT AERODROME COMMITTEE - 13 MAY 2025

TAC.04/25 RESOLVED:

THAT THE COMMITTEE:

1. Receive the report on Matters - Tumut Aerodrome Committee - 13 May 2025
2. Note the update on the Aerodrome Upgrade project

ALL CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

1. Extraordinary Meeting of the Tumut Aerodrome Committee

TAC.05/25 RESOLVED:

THAT THE COMMITTEE:

1. Hold an Extraordinary Meeting of the Tumut Aerodrome Committee as soon as possible and invite both the RFS and members of the Softwoods Working Group to address the committee and answer questions on the proposed new \$3,850,000 Hangar facility at Tumut Aerodrome.

ALL CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Note: The extraordinary committee meeting was held on Tuesday 27 May 2025.

9. GENERAL BUSINESS:

1. Re-nomination of Committee Members

Note a completed Nomination Form was received by Peter Wilson at the meeting. Peter previously completed and handed a form into the committee at its February meeting, which was accepted by Council 20 March 2025.

2. General Business Questions from Committee Members:

Runway Pavement Strength

Mr Fred Kell wanted to confirm what the pavement strength of the new runway would be – was it 2B Aerodrome pavement strength?

- Councils' Director of Infrastructure and Works said he would provide that information to Mr Kell.

Unused Lighting Stanchions - lying in grass next to carpark

Mr Fred Kell wanted to know if the lighting stanchions that the Committee bought with a grant some years ago and are lying in the grass next to the carpark, could be re-used out at the Aerodrome – to light the apron next to the building.

- Councils' Director of Infrastructure and Works said he would get Council's Project Manager to see if this could be undertaken.

Subsequently Mr Kell has sent a diagram confirming where the lighting stanchions are to be located and Councils' Director of Infrastructure and Works has sent an email to the Project Manager requesting that a quotation be sort from an electrician to place the stanchions in the locations indicated on the plan provided by Mr Kell.

New windsocks

Mr Fred Kell informed the Committee that he had in his possession three (3) x new white windsocks that he had given to the Coordinator Works Maintenance (North) (Council employee) to be placed on the existing windsock when the upgrade was completed so that everything at the aerodrome looked new and upgraded. Mr Kell also informed the Committee he had a Red windsock in his possession.

- Councils' Director of Infrastructure and Works thanked Mr Kell for this contribution and assured him that the new windsock would be put in place at the end of the upgrade works.

Official Re-Opening

Committee members asked if there was going to be an official re-opening of the Aerodrome when the upgrade works are complete?

- Councils' Director of Infrastructure and Works stated, he believed that it is a condition of the grant funding that an official opening be held, which he will check. Either way Councils Director stated that there would be an official re-opening of the Aerodrome one way or another as the upgrade and all the hard work that everyone has put in will be worth celebrating.

Hanger Lease Fees and Airpark (Aerodrome Access Fees) Lease fees

Discussion by committee members on Access fees – what were these fees?

Councils' Director of Infrastructure and Works informed the Committee that Aerodrome – Airpark Access Fees had been standard fees and charges for users out at the Aerodrome for many years – in Council's adopted Fees and Charges doe 2024/2025.

A copy of Councils Fees and Charges 2024-25 for Tumut Aerodrome are listed below:

AVIATION FACILITIES					
Tumut Aerodrome					
Hanger Site Fee	(Per sq.m of leased area). Licence agreement is required	Y	E	\$3.20	\$3.40
Airpark Access Fee (per lot) including True north	(Per sq. of hanger area)	T	E	\$3.20	3.40
Aircraft (including helicopters) Parking Fee	Monthly storage fee for individual aircraft and helicopters. Storage duration is cumulative.	Y	E	\$95.00	\$100.00
Pavement Concession Applications	Assessment and administration	Y	E	NA	\$150.00
Pavement Concession (Infrastructure Compensation)	A fee may be applicable where MTOW > 5700 kg	Y	E	POA	\$250.00
Fuel Levy	A levy charged per litre of fuel sold on site at Tumut Aerodrome	Y	E	\$0.05	\$0.10

FEE NAME	FEE DESCRIPTION	GST APPLICABLE	FEE TYPE CODE	2023-24 FEE (Incl. GST)	2024-25 FEE (Incl. GST)
Key Deposit - for vehicular access to aerodrome	Refundable. Aerodrome vehicle access policy applies. Authorised personnel only.	Y	E	\$81.00	\$84.00
Replacement (lost) gate key	Fee to cut new gate key - for registered authorised personnel only.	Y	E	\$81.00	\$100.00
Tumbarumba Airstrip					
Hanger Site Fee	(per sq.m of leased area). Licence Agreement is required	Y	E	POA	\$250.00

Councils' Director of Infrastructure and Works informed the Committee that these fees may not have been charged by Council for a number of years which is maybe the reason for the query from committee members on the fees. Councils' Director of Infrastructure and Works informed the Committee that this had now changed, and letters have been sent out to leaseholders and operators at the Aerodrome about the requirement to pay these standard fees and charges.

10. NEXT MEETING

The Committee resolved to hold an Extraordinary Meeting of the Tumut Aerodrome Committee as soon as possible and invite both the RFS and members of the Softwoods Working Group to address the committee and answer questions on the proposed new \$3,850,000 Hangar facility at Tumut Aerodrome.

The next meeting will be held on the 12 August 2025 commencing at 4pm in the Riverina Room / via video link.

Duncan Mitchell

From: Jon Gregory <[REDACTED]@rfs.nsw.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 12 May 2025 5:47 PM
To: Duncan Mitchell
Cc: Jessica Quilty; Julia Ham; Glen McGrath; Anne Shanahan
Subject: Re; Clarification Regarding February Aerodrome Committee and Directors Report Update
Attachments: Plantations FRG letter to SVC re PFPF - 22nd November 2024.pdf; 20250513 - Business Paper - Tumut Aerodrome Committee.pdf; 250121 New fire protection projects to help protect southern NSW plantation forests.pdf

Good Afternoon Duncan,

I am writing to formally raise several concerns regarding the minutes from the February meeting of the Aerodrome Committee and the accompanying report from the Director of Infrastructure and Works – May13. It is essential that all publicly available information is accurate and factually correct, and I would like to offer clarifications on several items to ensure this is the case:

Minute Item 6

I would like to clarify that the proposed hangar is *not* an RFS hangar. The hangar is part of a \$13 million Plantation Fire Protection Fund awarded to the Local Government Areas of Albury, Greater Hume, Cootamundra-Gundagai and Snowy Valleys (Wagga Wagga was added through the process) by the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Tara Moriarty. The Softwoods Working Group strongly advocated on behalf of its members for enhanced protection for the region given the devastation of 2019-2020 fires and its associated impacts to the Snowy Valleys LGA which we are still experiencing. The Softwood Working Group has worked extremely hard to improve the fire protection available to the local community so we never see the devastation again we experienced during the 2019 -20 Fire Season.

For the hangar project, Snowy Valleys Council is the grant applicant. The intent of this project is to establish a hangar facility strategically located near vulnerable softwood plantations, where a heavy helicopter capable of carrying large quantities of water (e.g., a Blackhawk) could be engaged and based during periods of heightened fire risk. This helicopter could be positioned at the Tumut Aerodrome by any stakeholder. This in fact did occur in Snowy Valley LGA during our most recent fire season where NPWS engaged a Blackhawk, incidentally local smaller machines were also engaged. For your reference, I have attached a copy of the Ministerial media release and a letter of clarification from the Fire Reference Group. I also wanted to flag that all grant applicants were subject to a confidentiality agreement leading up to Minister Moriarty's formal announcement.

Minute Item 7

It should be noted that Mr Tony Clee has no formal association with the NSW RFS and does not have the authority to make statements or comments on behalf of the organisation.

Minute Item 9

As discussed with the General Manager of Snowy Valleys Council, the existing RFS airbase facility will remain operational and will not be vacated until the new Fire Control Centre (FCC) has been fully established and commissioned. The existing site remains a critical component of firefighting operations in the Snowy Valleys area.

Director of Infrastructure Report – 13 May

New Fire Control Centre

For any information related to the funding of the new Fire Control Centre, please refer enquiries to RFS Deputy Commissioner – Strategic Capability, Peter McKechnie. I would be pleased to assist in facilitating any such enquiries.

Softwood Working Group – Plantation Fire Protection Fund

This should be “Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development - Plantation Fire Protection Fund

- **Dot Point 1:** The statement that the hangar is to house a “re-purposed Black Hawk helicopter” is inaccurate and does not reflect the intent of the larger group that worked to prioritise the funding opportunities. As outlined previously, the hangar is intended to be a base for a heavy helicopter capable of carrying substantial quantities of water during high fire risk periods. No such base currently exists in southern NSW. To minimise construction costs, avoid impacts on the new FCC footprint, and meet grant timelines, NSW RFS has provided a suggested hangar design and relevant FCC details to Public Works and Council’s Project Team, who are managing the designs, approvals and construction.
- **Dot Point 3:** This item holds no specific relevance to the Tumut Aerodrome Committee beyond general information that the slasher/mulcher is intended to assist in managing fire trails and roadside bushfire fuel loads. I question the relevance of it’s inclusion in the Aerodrome report.

Finally, I would like to advise that the NSW RFS Riverina Highlands District will not be renewing its membership of the Tumut Aerodrome Committee. We remain happy to provide relevant reports to the Tumut Aerodrome Committee or Snowy Valleys Council as needed. With respect to operational matters, we will continue to provide regular briefings to Council’s Local Emergency Management Officer (LEMO), Mr Glen McGrath.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Tumut Aerodrome Committee. I look forward to continuing our collaborative work with Council.

Kind regards,

22 November 2024

Snowy Valleys Council
Att: General Manager, Mr. S. Pinnuck
info@svc.nsw.gov.au
cc jham@svc.nsw.gov.au

Re: Invitation to apply for Tumut Aerodrome Aircraft Hangar Project - Plantations Fire Protection Fund and Council motion

Dear Steven,

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the Plantations Fire Reference Group (FRG). The Fire Reference Group is aware of the motion carried at the Council meeting on the 21st November regarding the invitation to apply for the Tumut Aerodrome Aircraft Hangar project as part of the Plantations Fire Protection Fund (PFPF).

It was noted that the Council supported progressing the project on the condition that assurance was provided to Council that locally based aerial firefighting services currently available are not diminished. As previously advised by the Fire Reference Group, the new hangar would not conflict with local service providers. True North has an existing use contract with the National Aerial Fire Fighting Centre (also see <https://www.nafc.org.au/>), which includes allocations for Tumut. These contracts have fixed terms and are reviewed periodically on a commercial arrangement and is something that is beyond the remit of the Plantations Fire Protection Fund process.

The Fire Reference Group is not associated with the commercial arrangements between aircraft services providers and the NSW Government. Therefore, we cannot provide any further assurances in relation to contracting arrangements for the provision of local firefighting services now or in the future.

It should be noted that the purpose of the hangar is to provide *additional* and enhanced capacity for specialist firefighting aircraft to be available to the region. It is not about substituting one service for another. The project was identified to support the accommodation of firefighting aircraft owned or engaged by firefighting authorities without charges being incurred for its use.

As the closing date for submission of applications is fast approaching with applications due on the 3rd December 2024, it would be appreciated if the Council could advise the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (via forests@dpi.nsw.gov.au) if they do not wish to proceed.

The Fire Reference Group has identified other priority projects that may be able to be considered for the PFPF if the Council do not wish to proceed and the application was withdrawn prior to the closing date for applications. It is uncertain if there will be an opportunity in the PFPF for alternative priority fire protection projects to be funded in the region if the Council chooses to withdraw the application after submission.

Sincerely



Karen Kneipp

Chair, Plantations Fire Reference Group

karen.kneipp@dpird.nsw.gov.au

MURRAY REGION FIRE PROTECTION GRANT - TUMUT AERODROME HANGAR

1.

REPORT AUTHOR: MANAGER TECHNICAL SERVICES

RESPONSIBLE DIRECTOR: INTERIM GENERAL MANAGER

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Snowy Valleys Council considered at the 17 October, 2024 Ordinary Meeting the application for the Murray Region Fire Protection Grant.

Council has received notice from the Department and Fire Reference Groups advising that the purchase of land was not an eligible project for submission. This was originally a project investigated by the FRG in July but not able to be proceeded with. The FRG have met to discuss potential other projects and are seeking Council endorsement for the progression of the Tumut Aerodrome Hangar project with additional available information presented

3. RECOMMENDATION:

THAT COUNCIL:

1. Approve the submission of the Tumut Aerodrome Hangar Project under the Murray Region Fire Protection Grant

4. BACKGROUND:

Following presentation of a report, Council considered the Murray Region Fire Protection Grant application at its ordinary 17 October 2024 meeting. Council resolved the following:

M212/24 RESOLVED:

THAT COUNCIL:

1. Endorse proceeding with application for the Tumut Aerodrome water supply for fire management.

Cr Larter/Cr Wortes

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

M213/24 RESOLVED

THAT COUNCIL:

2. Not support the Tumut Aerodrome hangar application and seek Softwoods Working Group endorsement of Council's application to facilitate the acquisition of land for the future extension of the runway.

Cr Larter/Cr Packard

For: Cr Ham, Cr Hayes, Cr Hardwick, Cr Inglis, Cr Larter, Cr Packard, Cr Wortes

Against: Cr Thomson, Cr Sheldon

7 / 2

CARRIED

M214/24 RESOLVED:

THAT COUNCIL:

3. Endorse proceeding with the Specialist Tractor and Mulcher grant application.

Cr Larter/Cr Sheldon

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

5. REPORT:

Council has received additional information from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (The Department) regarding the invitation to apply for Tumut Aerodrome Aircraft Hangar Project

under the Plantations Fire Protection Fund. The Department has provided more context around the Fire Reference Group (FRG) and its decision making and 'believes the facility is crucial for both immediate and long-term fire protection in the region'.

Further information provided by the FRG per the attachment to this report with the key points extracted below for Council consideration.

1. **Strategic Role of the Hangar:** The RFS would at times, based on operational demand be able to base the Bell 412 or similar specialist helicopter in Tumut if a suitable stabling facility were available. The specialist helicopter is equipped with advanced heat-sensing technology, including Forward Looking Infra-Red (FLIR) cameras, which allow for aerial surveillance and fire detection, even in low-visibility or nighttime conditions. The Bell 412 can also transport personnel, deploy winching operations, and conduct water drops up to 1,400L per drop utilising a 'belly tank' arrangement.

The hangar would also be suitable for the soon to be commissioned Black Hawk aircraft (which could be located at Tumut at times based on operational priorities) which provides excellent initial direct attack capability due to its high performance and water drop capacity of 4,000L utilising a 'belly tank' arrangement.

Additionally, a NSW firefighting authority, Forestry Corporation of NSW would be able to utilise the facility to locate their contract aircraft based on operational activity.
2. **Complementary to Local Services:** The new hangar would not conflict with local service providers. True North has an existing use contract with the National Aerial Fire Fighting Centre (also see <https://www.nafc.org.au/>), which includes allocations for Tumut. These contracts have fixed terms and are reviewed periodically on a commercial arrangement. Hence the new hangar would complement these services for the region.
3. **Multi-Use Facility:** When not required for the specialist firefighting aircraft, the hangar would be available for other uses.
4. **Interim Maintenance Funding:** While the RFS may not assume maintenance costs until the new Fire Control Centre is complete, the Softwood Working Group (SWG) is confident it can secure an interim funding source.
5. **Alignment with the Master Plan:** The precinct's Master Plan includes provisions for a hangar.
6. **Commitment to Tumut Fire Control Centre:** While the RFS remains committed to a Fire Control Centre in Tumut, prioritisation for this Program delivery has resulted in delayed roll out of some Fire Control Centres. Despite this, the RFS is committed to the completion of the new Fire Control Centre.

6. LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN AND DELIVERY AND OPERATIONAL PLAN:

Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework:

Community Strategic Plan Theme

Theme 1 - Our Community

Theme 3 - Our Environment

Theme 4 - Our Infrastructure

Theme 5 - Our Civic Leadership

Community Strategic Plan Strategic Objectives

CSP1 Our communities are connected and inclusive. Supported by services that nurture health, wellbeing and identity

CSP3 Our natural environment is cared for and protected to ensure future generations can experience and enjoy its beauty

CSP4 Our infrastructure includes Council services that plan, manage, maintain and renew our community infrastructure and transport networks

CSP5 Our Civic leadership and organisation government fosters open and transparent partnership with our community

Delivery Program Principal Activities

1.4 Plan, manage and support the response and recovery of communities from natural disasters and economic shocks

3.1 Create climate resilience through our actions and advocacy

3.4 Partner with other agencies to protect our natural spaces and environment

4.2 Manage and plan for affordable infrastructure to meet current and future community needs

5.6 Proactively support and advocate for the needs of the community to other level of government and organisations

7. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS:

Operating costs have been estimated at between \$5,000 and \$10,000 per year. Council has received formal notice from the Softwood Industry committing to funding operational costs of the hangar over the next 5 years. This agreement ending, coincides with the forecast completion of the Fire Control Centre (FCC) that is currently in the planning stage by Rural Fire Service. Upon completion of the FCC, it is intended that these costs transfer to the Rural Fire Service.

8. POLICY, LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS:

Local Government Act 1993

Rural Fires Act 1997

9. RISK MANAGEMENT / COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS:

Nil additional.

10. OPTIONS:

1. Adopt as per recommendations set out in this report - preferred option.
2. Amend.
3. Decline the recommendations set out in this report

11. COUNCIL SEAL REQUIRED:

No

12. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION:

Nil additional.

13. ATTACHMENTS

1. Letter Received From Fire Reference Group (Under separate cover)
2. Letter industry funding from SWG (Under separate cover)
3. BFMC Letter of Support - Heavy Helicopter Hanger Grant Proposal (Under separate cover)