



ALLAWAH LODGE PROPOSAL



JUNE 2018

PRECIS

You can determine the strength of a Community by how well they look after their elderly.

Coolamon Shire Council needs to launch into the next stage of looking after our aged community by undertaking improvements and an upgrade to the Allawah Lodge Residential Aged Care facility. Caring for an increased ageing population will be the challenge of this generation.

As we know there is already a health related drain on our regional communities that ultimately impacts on our Regional Centres. For age and medical reasons, people gravitate into larger towns and regional cities to gain closer access to services. We believe that Coolamon Shire Council has the opportunity to halt this drain and provide excellent facilities to our community members that will keep them in their local communities, ultimately making them happier and healthier.

Coolamon Shire Council believes that for the long term future of our community, we need to embrace this challenge and tackle it proactively.

For this reason Coolamon Shire Council will embark on a process to upgrade our facilities and provide the best possible place for our elderly to live and age in their existing community.

HISTORY

Aged Care for the Coolamon Shire Council has been an important part of how we operate. It is integral to how we support our community.

During the early 1990's Council perceived the need for the development and enhancement of aged care and medical facilities within the Shire. The existing facilities were inadequate and were not an attraction to residents living out their life in their community nor for encouraging medical practitioners to come and work in the area.

Council started with constructing Allawah Lodge in 1992 and provided extensions in 1997 and an 11 bed dementia wing in 2004.

Council now owns and operates a successful health precinct that caters not only to the elderly, but benefits the whole Shire through access to health services. This started with a strategic decision and concept and has now grown into an exemplar for small communities.

COUNCIL PHILOSOPHY

Council's priority in undertaking this project was to care for the elderly in their own community surrounded by their existing care networks. Too often we had seen elderly couples split and moved to different residential facilities around the region which saw them no longer in contact with their partner. As the ageing population lose their ability to drive, it means people were becoming more isolated. This has a greater impact in rural areas when combined with a lack of public transport, and a reliance on family or volunteers.

In addition to the desire to provide appropriate care to our communities, these facilities created employment and job opportunities for those currently living in the community. We are aware that the future of our communities is tied to jobs growth and this coupled with financially achievable goals of home ownership make Coolamon an ideal opportunity for young couples and people seeking a change.

EXISTING SITUATION

Currently on the 7 hectare site the following facilities make up what is termed the “Health Precinct”.

1	Allawah Lodge Residential Aged Care Facility ➤ Stage 1 – 12 bed low care Hostel - 1992 ➤ Stage 2 – 10 bed low care extension - 1997 ➤ Stage 3 – 11 bed Dementia Wing - 2004	Finalised 2004
2	Coolamon-Ganmain Hospital includes acute care beds	Finalised 1997
3	Coolamon Shire Medical and Dental Clinic housing up to 3 Doctors and a Dentist	Finalised 2003
4	Community Centre – providing offices for Allawah Community Care, Community Nurse and Visiting Allied Health Professionals	Finalised 2000
5	Retirement Village – 25 units with potential for further units	Ongoing

This project has received the full support of the local community and it must be noted that the entire complex is currently debt free. The complex has received support from grants and various funding bodies over this time but has been built and managed by Coolamon Shire Council. But its true success is mainly due to the support it received from the community in donations which to date, are valued at approximately \$1.8 Million.

Council are the trusted representatives of this community support, something that Council does not take lightly. It is for this reason that a decision has been made to pursue significant capital improvements to ensure the ongoing viability of this community resource.

The original construction of these facilities was for low care needs and was suitable to the needs of residents and the funding model at the time. As people and policies are moving towards ageing in place, the need for more physically appropriate accommodation requires ongoing infrastructure upgrades.

Whilst Council’s Asset Management policies and procedures can take care of all operational, maintenance and replacement costs, the initial capital investment requires government support.

CARE NEEDS

Coolamon Shire Council takes the care of its community and in particular the elderly very seriously. This is why we developed a strategic approach based on providing the best care we could for our community. This long term view has created the existing facilities and a pathway for people transitioning to aged care.

Nothing in this approach has changed and it is now apparent that in order to provide the best possible care we need to upskill our staff and provide better clinical care. Whilst currently not compulsory, the employment of 24 hour Registered Nursing staff is seen as the natural progression. We agree with the current stance of the Government that this not be a mandatory requirement as this would make the facility as it currently exists, financially unviable.

This current position is not related to our long term wish to deliver this level of clinical care but more about the need to prepare ourselves both structurally and financially for this change.

In order to do this, we will need to restructure the staffing.

In order to pay for this increased staffing and ultimately care needs for the residents, additional bed numbers are required for it to be financially sustainable.

OPPORTUNITIES

The project to increase bed numbers at Allawah Lodge and the benefits that this would have to the health and care of our elderly and also the job opportunities of our residents, mean that there are several infrastructure funding opportunities available for Council to pursue.

The Federal Grants associated with bed allocations will be sourced and we would like the support of the State and Federal Government when Council seeks the appropriate funding.

The Building Better Regions Fund targets employment and community sustainability through job creation. This proposal would effectively double the staff numbers in Allawah Lodge. Currently the facility employs approximately 30 staff and this will increase to approximately 60 when the goal is achieved. As a result Coolamon Shire Council will continue to be a significant employer within our Local Government area.

In addition, the new Regional Growth Fund announced by the State Government provides similar opportunities for communities to grow through the provision of infrastructure and community investment in New South Wales that promote local economic growth.

Council is under no illusion that this will be an easy and straightforward process. It will require an investment by all three levels of Government and the support of the community. At this stage Council and the community are on board with improving the Allawah Lodge Aged Care facilities and providing excellent and appropriate aged care that not only our community deserves but is an example to other Rural Communities.

THE PATH FORWARD

Council have already engaged Robert O'Shea Management to provide a report on the viability of the proposal. A copy of this report is attached. This relationship will continue as we work through the process of achieving our goal. (Attached).

There are some questions over bed numbers needed to accommodate the current and future community needs and Council is conscious of any growth needing to be sustainable in the long term. Accordingly, Council has also engaged Nelson Partners Australia to provide a Supply and Demand Analysis of Aged Care in the Region – specifically the Coolamon Region, incorporating Murrumbidgee, Ganmain, Ardlethan, Beckom and Matong. (See Attached).

This report indicated that approximately 9 beds are required at present with 20 required by 2026 and 29 by 2036. Council believes that appropriate Strategic Planning should be catering for at least the next 20-30 years.

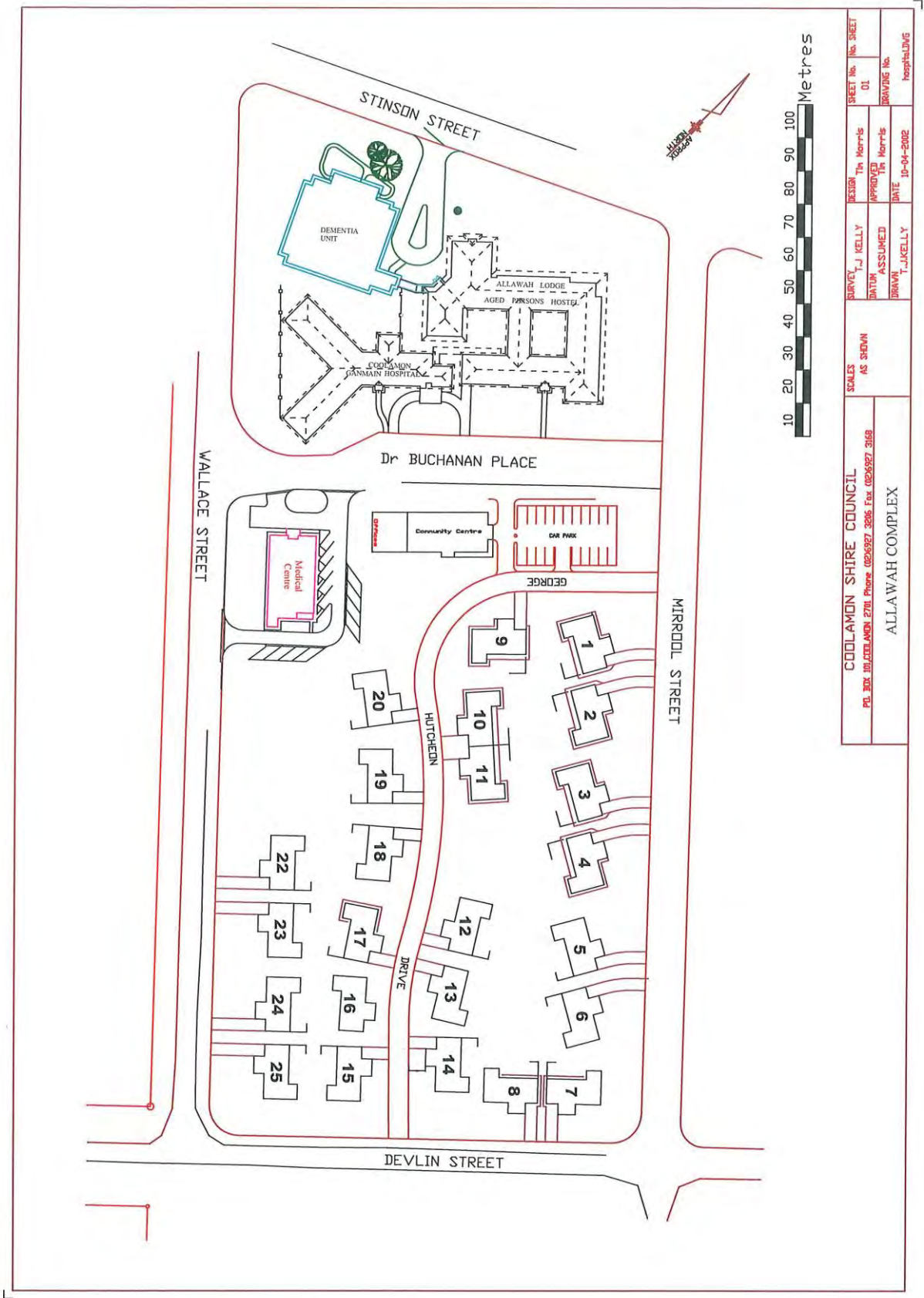
An Architect experienced in aged care construction will also be engaged to ensure that any proposal incorporates the best in modern infrastructure but reflects the open and relaxed lifestyle of the Coolamon Shire Community.

Council are within the early stages of preparing the appropriate business model, building plans, funding applications and reports that would accompany such a proposal.

Coolamon Shire Council have a long history of developing and implementing sound infrastructure and business models that support local communities to prosper.

The Allawah Lodge facility already exists and proposed improvements will create benefits that will enhance medical facilities, aged care, regional growth and sustainability.

SITE PLANS



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ALLAWAH COMPLEX					



