

TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT THE BALRANALD SHIRE COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON TUESDAY 10th APRIL COMMENCING AT 5.00PM.

1. **PRESENT:** Iain Lindsay-Field (Chair), Simone Carmichael, Ken Spinks, Dianne Williams, Emma Severi, Wayne Whitby, Peter Lawler, Cr German Ugarte, Michael Kitzelmann (General Manager – Balranald Shire Council , Terri Bilske (Director Corporate and Community Development - Balranald Shire Council)
2. **APOLOGIES RECEIVED:** Bronwyn Brougham, Ken Barnes, Kathy Anderson, Linda Nelson
3. **ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING:**
The Minutes were accepted from the previous meeting.
MOVED: Ken Spinks
SECONDED: Dianne Williams
4. **BUSINESS ARISING:**
 - a) One Road Great Aus Road Trips – Lee Lorraine from Visage Productions suggested approaching other LGAs for support. Chair will continue to progress this matter in readiness for the new Tourism Co-Ordinator so that they can “hit the road running”.
 - b) Fish Restocking – Background given by Chair (Ken B. had asked for a letter to be written to the Minister of Fisheries in respect to fingerling releases) and he read out email (following) from the Balranald Ex-Services Anglers Club. The Club had views on black water, fish migration and the Balranald Low Level Weir. The Club, with the members present at their April Meeting, were not prepared to make comment on the effectiveness of re-stocking programs and the low effectiveness (0-15%) of re-stocking programs as mentioned in Simone’s email. Simone re-iterated what she had advised in her email (following) of 16th March, 2018 and added that fish egg movement and survival tests are currently being done at Yanga with seemingly good results. Ken S raised concerns about Balranald Low Level Weir fish ladder is not working. The Low Level weir is an ‘over the wall’ weir. Both Balranald Ex-Services Anglers Club and Mon’s sources both supported Ken B’s idea of writing to the Minister of Fisheries.

Ken S suggested to improve river habitat and boat navigation snags should be trimmed and pulled against the bank. Peter L stated the fish ladder needs repair to allow fish access between Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers. He also stated that fishing is good upstream from Redbank Weir and that no Murray Cod were caught at the recent fishing competition in Balranald. The Chair advised that he had heard from local fisherman that, as Redbank Weir is an ‘under the wall’ weir, fish eggs are destroyed due to high water pressures as they go under the weir. Mon also mentioned that the Office of Environment & Heritage are examining the idea of having weirs open at certain times of the year to allow fish migration and fish egg movement.

Michael K. advised that, in his experience, fish ladders are ineffective. Michael K also suggested the committee make a recommendation to Council that a letter be sent to NSW DPI Fisheries and the Murray Darling Basin Authority requesting an assessment of river health between Redbank and Balranald weirs based on the apparent lack of native fish in that stretch of river.

Comment by the Chair: As the investigation of this issue by the Committee has brought up the habitat issue in addition to the fingerling issue, the Chair suggests that two letters be written. One on the fingerling issue and a second letter on the river health/habitat issue. Fingerlings have worked over a lot of years and in other places while it is clear there is a problem with native fish stocks between Redbank and the Balranald Low Level Weir. Both letters will then be put to Council for them to consider.

- c) Tourism Thumb Drive – has been received by Shire from Connie. Terri agreed to make the “Key Tourism Actions for 2018” available to the Committee once it has been to Council.
- d) Selection Committee for Tourism Coordinator – Michael advised members of the committee will not be permitted to sit on the selection committee but will seek committee input into selection criteria. Chair to make himself available for discussion on this matter.
- e) Fence Discovery Centre – Committee recommends Shire consider prohibiting vehicle access to the grassed area at the rear of the Discovery Centre either by;
 - 1) Installing a chain link fence or bollards, or
 - 2) Developing a bush tucker garden in consultation with local community of endemic resource plants.
- f) Group Accommodation – Discussion held around Shire negotiating with mines / solar / nut farms around temp workers accommodation with it being made available after project for use as group accommodation of and seasonal worker accommodation.

5. NEW BUSINESS

- a) Nature Reserve Walking Trail and Town Bike Tracks – Ken S unhappy with the lack of progress on this issue as it has been going on for over 18 months. Discussion held around the issues associated (tenure, cultural, lignum encroachment etc.) and the need to make projects accessible and assessable to Shire via a template outlining community/business case, stages, costings, cost benefit analysis and assistance to the Committee by the Shire to get traction on this and other projects. Iain and Terri to discuss.
- b) New Committee Members – Prospective new members need to submit Expression of Interest and meet committee selection criteria. Iain and Terri to discuss.
- c) Tourism Display - German informed the committee a display promoting Balranald has been installed in the Swan Hill Visitor Centre. A photo was distributed, many thanks to German.

Meeting concluded at 6.10pm

Ken's Email

Fish Restocking Program

At last meeting I flagged a situation developing that threatens the NSW \$ for \$ fish restocking programs.

The concept of private restocking was instigated by the Kyalite Hotel about 26 or 27 years ago. It was a unique event that attracted National TV News coverage. From this flowed the \$ for \$ program which has been a huge success but is now in danger of collapsing, bringing down a massive tourism factor with it. Traditionally there has been six approved breeding hatcheries that supplied fingerlings for the restocking program – this year there is one. There is no guarantee this will be available next year**

There are three issues affecting supply of fingerlings to NSW.

1/. The harvest traditionally runs from late September to about March the following year. The method involved hatcheries supplying (mainly fishing clubs) and delivering to, on demand. A piecemeal procedure that was labour and travel intensive – it was expensive.

2/. This year the Fisheries have placed extra and unrealistic conditions on hatcheries to legally deliver fish to the buyers. For example, hatcheries now have to do a risk assessment of not only the people receiving but also release sites.

3/. Competition from neighbouring states. Both Victoria and S.A purchase their fish from NSW hatcheries. This is done with a bulk pickup. Purpose built trucks take delivery at the hatchery thus relieving hatcheries of the lengthy and onerous harvest costs they have previously carried.

Other factors that “muddy the waters” so to speak. Hatcheries believe NSW Fisheries is not doing enough at ground roots level to support their industry. Although the promotion of \$ for \$ is glossy and “feel good” the reality could be better. The annual revenue from fishing licences is \$15 million, the spend on \$ for \$ is \$250,000. After recent black water events (caused by ill-conceived Government Enviromental policies) NSW Fisheries did not create an active restocking program. This is despite hatcheries approach to the Fisheries.

The taking of brood stock from zoned areas to maintain species DNA is unnecessary and expensive. Hatcheries are claiming that micro chipping and DNA testing is fast proving this practice irrelevant.

I have not confirmed the stated figures but I believe them to be truly indicative of the situation. It is also my understanding the hatcheries have asked for a formal meeting with Fisheries, thus far this has not been granted.

I may not be at Tuesday's meeting, but I feel the committee should discuss this situation and, if in agreeance, pass a resolution asking Council to write to the Minister for Fisheries with these concerns.

The hatcheries concerned are:

Gwydir Fish Native Fish hatchery

Murray Darling Fisheries

02 67222818

[02 69229447](tel:0269229447)

Namoi Valley Aqua farming [02 67921212](tel:0267921212)
Ray Mepham Native Fish hatchery [02 67232338](tel:0267232338)
Silver Water Native Fish [02 69562122](tel:0269562122)
Uarah Fish hatchery [02 69562147](tel:0269562147) **

This year Uarah is the only supplier to NSW. It has been recently purchased by a Chinese group and there is a strong rumour that next year's crop will be entirely for the Chinese market.

Ken Barnes
March 3rd, 2018

Balranald Ex-Services Anglers Club email dated April 2nd, 2018

re: Fish Restocking Effectiveness Issues – The General Meeting of the Balranald Anglers Club held on April 2nd read and discussed the emails sent to us from Simone and yourself (Iain). We acknowledged the views and opinions expressed by the parties in the email, and advise your Committee that the aim of our Club is to see minimal carp and more native fish in our local rivers, better river management to avoid severe black water and blue/green algae events, unseasonal flooding and bank degradation, with most discussion being on having a workable fish ladder at the Balranald Low Level weir. We, as a group, all consider this issue to be the main reason we are not getting the migration of fish from the Murray and Darling Rivers into waterways in town and upstream. We believe that Cr. Jolliffe may have already raised the issue of the fish ladder with Council and State Govt representatives. The members present at the meeting offered no comment on the statistical opinions expressed in the email regarding the value and effectiveness of restocking programs.
Thank you for your offer for us to comment on this matter.
Bill Harben Secretary Balranald Ex-Services Anglers Club

Simone's email dated 16th March, 2018

Hi all,

As per our last meeting I managed to speak to a couple of people regarding the concerns raised by Ken re fish restocking. I spoke to Luke Pearce from DPI Fisheries. He is not directly involved in the restocking side of things but said the (Gov) Naranderra Native Fish Nursery may be able to assist. All native fingerlings bred in captivity have been identified through a bone dye marking system. This is no longer the case and they now use DNA to id captive bred fish, this is why the taking of brood stock from zones is necessary, to be able to track fish movement. Luke also said that restocking is ineffective with research proving success rates between 0 – 15%. A huge amount of effort is going into research and facilitating natural recruitment (breeding) of native fish. The biggest issues are weirs and irrigation pumps (these destroy fish eggs/larvae and stop natural fish migration). A great use of environmental water is trying to replicate flow patterns that will encourage fish breeding and allow the drift of eggs and fish larvae into lakes and floodways so they can grow-out and later re-enter the river systems. Balranald's lakes such as Tala Lake and Yanga Lake play an important role in this.

I also spoke to a representative of the Leeton Bidgee Classic, Wayne McPherson, they held their comp recently with great success, several Cod were caught over 1m! He echoed Kens concerns confirming that Uarah is the only private fish hatchery supplying fingerlings and that they have indeed been bought by the Chinese who (more than likely) will export the whole supply to the Chinese market. He also said that restocking is a bit of a PR exercise with only 15% of fingerlings surviving to maturity and that efforts are better spent encouraging natural spawning through habitat improvements etc. A single fish will lay more eggs than the 22000 Yellow Belly fingerlings they released as part of their comp last weekend. Wayne is a FishCare Volunteer, he assists in running conservation fishing education clinics with DPI Fisheries for schools mostly and also at competitions. He said that a letter to the Minister would be a good idea, he also said there is a meeting in May/June with Brett Smith (DPI Fisheries Education Officer) with all the major fishing comp committees to try and facilitate FishCare activities at all the fishing comps. He said this would be a great opportunity for all the committees to discuss the concerns of the \$ for \$ restocking program and coordinate a response. His contact details are 0429 991545 email; wremacca@bigpond.com.

Sorry to waffle on but the long and short of it is, the TED committee should (in my opinion) support Ken's request that the shire write to the minister. I also encourage Ken and Bill to contact Wayne McPherson to coordinate a response from all the fishing clubs that this affects.

Regards
Mon