

Minutes for the Leards Forest Environmental Trust Inc. Meeting

Meeting Held: Thursday 26 May 2022 from 12:15 pm

Venue: Boggabri Golf Club

Present: Darren Swain (DS) – Whitehaven Coal, Cr Lisa Richardson (LR) – Narrabri Shire Council, Hamish Russell (HR) – BCOP, Lloyd Finlay (LF) – Community Representative, Michelle Henry (MH) – Narrabri Shire Council, Mitchum Neave (MN) - Boggabri CCC, Ros Druce (RD) – Boggabri CCC, Stewart Dunlop (SD) – Boggabri Coal

Apologies: Colleen Fuller (CF), Madeline Wright – Whitehaven Coal

Independent Chair: David Ross (DR) **Independent Secretary:** Debbie Corlet (DC)

1. Welcome & apologies

Meeting opened at 12:21 pm. DR welcomed everyone to the Environmental Trust meeting.

2. Declaration of pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests

HR advised that there might be an application from the Golf Club and wanted the committee to know that an employee of Boggabri Coal is a member of the Club.

3. Acceptance of Previous Minutes and Business Arising

The minutes were endorsed by members as an appropriate summary of what was discussed.

DR gave a summary of the Trust’s mission and history to new members. A key challenge for the Trust has been a lack of awareness within the community that we exist and what we offer. It is anticipated that the Trust’s commenced improvement of its guidelines for applicants will help make people aware of our existence.

The actions from our last meeting are, on the whole, still open. DR has drafted an explanatory note with the Guidelines, which was sent out earlier in the year to members. Responses have not been chased up as DR is mindful that people have been exhausted due to the pandemic.

Members agreed to provide feedback to the draft document by the first week of July. MH kindly offered to facilitate assistance from Narrabri Council (NSC), where appropriate.

ACTION 1 – DR to resend the draft Guidelines to members.

ACTION 2 – DR to send a hard copy of the draft Guidelines to MN.

ACTION 3 - DR to talk to Michelle and Lisa re the Trust’s history and what role NSC could play in enhancing awareness.

4. Review and Consideration of Applications

DR observed that only one application was received. This was for solar panels for Boggabri Golf Club. It was conceded that the application came in late, arriving only three days before the Trust met.

Concerns were raised that the applicant had left their submission too late and therefore, some proposed that the review of the application should be held off until our October meeting. DR understood the concerns raised but offered that he brought the application to the meeting because there were no other applications to review.

MN stated that the application not only should have to wait until the next round, but also questioned why the applicant can't seek the funds through the VPA funding or Boggabri Coal?

This triggered a discussion amongst members. HR responded that one of the Trust's functions is to consider each application on its merits and whether we need to consider if it's a yes or no. MH read through the Council's spending to date with respect to the VPA funds. She observed that lots of projects have all been funded but definitely still funds sitting there. There is definitely more work needs to be done with Council to make people are aware of them.

In response, MN noted that the Trust only has a small bucket of money. The word needs to get out there, that there are other avenues as well. LR was under the impression that there is no VPA money left.

ACTION 4 – MH to check with the NSC Finance Manager what money has been spent to date and on what.

The discussion then continued, exploring VPA money set aside for construction of a doctor's house, the mine's housing construction programs and how money could be freed for the funding of other projects.

DR raised some questions for the members to consider. Reminding members that the Trust is about environmental improvements – and we have reviewed a solar panel proposal – is that proposal aligned with what we do? Does it meet our criteria – yes or no? He also observed that, from looking at our most recent financial statement, the Trust has not spent a third of its budget in over the last six years of being in operation.

RD reminded members of the concerns she raised with members in late 2020 that the Trust had to go back to more natural habitat improvement projects – projects to do with the Leard State Forest. It's gone from one tangent to the next. The money is not burning a hole. Every application is going to be solar and water tanks and I don't think that is what the Trust is about.

DR agreed that due to RD's concerns raised in 2020, the Trust decided it would be preferable to fund more habitat improvement or vegetation projects. We did, however, agree that solar panels were still applicable for the Trust to fund. This was written in the one pager we put out in the Green Flyer last year that members provided comments on. DR proposed that members need to look at the criteria discuss whether the application meets the criteria.

A lengthy discussion then followed with members exploring the pros and cons of funding the application. There was a belief stated by some members that the application met the Trust's criteria. However, there was the observation that the application came in late and there was the risk of habitat or vegetation improvement proposals missing out if all solar panel proposals were accepted. Yet, it was also noted that the Trust has funded a worthy weed control project in the past.

LR proposed that the Trust could word a statement that only a limited number of solar panels' proposals could be funded in a year and nothing else will be accepted for the remainder of this calendar year (or what is decided). Or maybe a ratio of percentage of monetary value. Each year there is \$50,000 for grants. A maximum amount allocated to a type of project like solar. Does it need to be three or four applicants or a dollar figure? Members agreed to exploring this proposal further.

DR – Need a video call before our October Trust meeting as we need to sort this out before the next meeting. Have it in writing about what the criteria is going to be.

ACTION 5 – DR to talk to RD about drafting funding statement

ACTION 6 - DR to organise a video call before next Trust meeting.

The discussion continued with respect to the application before DR called for a vote. The solar panel application was approved with a majority of members agreeing to its funding.

5. General Business

MH – I'll chat to the Media Officer as well about how to promote the Trust more.

6. Date for Next Meeting

DR thanked members for their input. Next meeting is scheduled for late October 2022.

Meeting closed at 1:26 pm.

Action List

Action Owner	Action to be completed	Date Raised
DR & all	DR to resend the draft Guidelines to members for review	May 2022
DR	DR to send a hard copy of the draft Guidelines to MN.	May 2022
DR	DR to talk to Michelle and Lisa re Trust's history and what role NSC could play in enhancing awareness.	May 2022
DR	Locate and discuss revised draft guidelines with graphic designer and obtain quote	May 2021
DR	Gain approval from Trust for quote	May 2021
MH	MH to check with the NSC Finance Manager what money has been spent to date and on what.	May 2022
DR	DR to talk to RD about drafting funding statement	May 2022
DR	DR to organise a video call before next Trust meeting.	May 2022