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# **Community Advisory Committee - Merriwa District Agenda**

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21 May 2024 at 5.30pm



## UPPER HUNTER SHIRE COUNCIL

### COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE - MERRIWA DISTRICT

#### To All Councillors & Committee Members

*You are hereby notified that the next meeting of the Community Advisory Committee - Merriwa District will be held on 21 May 2024 in the Merriwa Meeting Room at , for the purpose of transacting the undermentioned business.*

*The Community Advisory Committee - Merriwa District consists of*

*Cr Ron Campbell, Cr Tayah Clout, Mr Ben Sullivan, Ms Sarah Thompson, Ms Jane Hegarty, Mr Patrick Ryan, Mr Robert Tindall, Ms Carlita Connell and Mr Neil Hunt.*

### **AGENDA**

- 1. APOLOGIES**
- 2. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**
- 3. PREVIOUS MINUTES**
  - Community Advisory Committee - Merriwa District held on 20 February 2024
- 4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES**
- 5. AGENDA ITEMS**

CAC-M.05.1	Action Sheet Update .....	9
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- 6. ACTION SHEET**
- 7. CORRESPONDENCE**

## **8. GENERAL BUSINESS**

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**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE -  
MERRIWA DISTRICT MEETING - TUESDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2024 -  
5.30pm**

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**PRESENT:** Cr Ron Campbell (Chair), Cr Tayah Clout, Sarah Thompson, Jane Hegarty, Patrick Ryan, Robert Tindall, Carlita Connell and Neil Hunt.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Greg McDonald, Rag Upadhyaya (Director Infrastructure Services) and Amanda Catzikiris (Manager Community Services / minutes).

**1. APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

**2. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST**

Nil

**3. PREVIOUS MINUTES**

Amendment in CAC-M.11.3 Item 17. to note change from TILT submission to Energy Co submission.

**RESOLVED**

**That the minutes of the Community Advisory Committee - Merriwa District Meeting held on 16 November 2023, as circulated, be taken as read and confirmed as a correct record.**

**Moved:** T Clout

**Seconded:** J Hegarty

**CARRIED**

**4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES**

- i. **RMS Bridge on King George V Drive** – J Hegarty spoke with school representatives regarding a submission to address the safety concerns. All submissions should be addressed to the General Manager.

**5. AGENDA ITEMS**

**CAC-M.02.1 Action Sheet Update**

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is for the Committee to review and consider items on the Action Sheet for the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Merriwa District.

The action sheet was reviewed at the meeting. There was further discussion regarding;

- Cemetery Reserve – request to Council to raise the issue of fire hazard through Crown Lands Office.
- EV Charging Station – Council has obtained a quote for \$34,320 for installation. A suitable location is to be considered. Funding options will need to be considered.
- Tidying of unmaintained yards in Cassilis – this issue is ongoing at the corner of Branksome St. Committee members are encouraged to raise a CRM.
- Haynes Awning Cassilis – no further action to date.
- Weed spraying Golden Highway Cassilis – request for further spraying required for spiny burr grass and cactus.

**RESOLVED**

**That the Committee note the issues and responses listed in the Action Sheet.**

**Moved:** P Ryan

**Seconded:** T Clout

**CARRIED**



### **ACTION FOR COMMITTEE:**

- i. Council to raise the issue of fire hazard in the Cemetery Reserve with Crown Lands Office.
- ii. Council to investigate funding opportunities and consider suitable location for the EV charging station.
- iii. General Manager to discuss ongoing concerns with Director Environmental & Community Services regarding tidying of unmaintained yards in Cassilis.
- iv. Councillor T Clout to request spray treatment of spiny burr grass and cactus.

### **CAC-M.02.2 Items Raised By The Community**

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to consider items submitted by committee members of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Merriwa District.

- i. Item 1. Merriwa Town Beautification Project – a quote of \$10,000 has been obtained for the wheel stops. A breakdown of the total funding was discussed including the allocation for tree lighting of \$40,000 which includes the vandalism cage and the footpath engraving, of which the quote of approximately \$45,000 has not been finalised. Further discussion regarding funding the shortfall on the Vennacher St intersection lighting design from the beautification fund. Consideration was given to using the balance of the funds for signage.
- ii. Item 2. Silo Art Tourist Stop – discussion regarding installation of solar lighting on the site. This will require permission from ARTC. Council to follow up. Maintaining the condition of the mural will need to be considered in the future, as the paint will fade.
- iii. Item 14. Council communication – discussion regarding the possibility of Council providing a brief one page community update each week to promote information in the Merriwa community. Council does not have the staff resources to provide this. Members are encouraged to access the Council website and Facebook for up to date information regarding news and activities across the Shire.

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the Committee review the items listed in the report.**

Moved: P. Ryan

Seconded: J. Hegarty

CARRIED

### **ACTION FOR COMMITTEE:**

- i. Director Infrastructure Services to work with C Connell to explore options and seek quotes for signage using the balance of the town beautification fund.
- ii. Director Environmental & Community Services to seek permission from ARTC to explore the proposal to install solar lights around the silo art.

### **RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL**

#### **That Council**

1. **accept the quote for \$10,000 for the wheel stops in Bettington Street to be funded from the Merriwa town beautification project budget.**
2. **use funds from the town beautification project to cover the shortfall on the Vennacher St lighting project.**
3. **use funds of up to \$2,000 from the town beautification project to cover the shortfall on the tree costs.**
4. **approve project management costs of up to 10% of total project value.**

Moved: P. Ryan

Seconded: J. Hegarty

CARRIED

### **CAC-M.02.3            Australia Day Subcommittee - Merriwa District**

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to present the minutes of the Australia Day Subcommittee – Merriwa District meetings held on 31 October 2023, 14 November 2023 and 16 January 2024.

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the committee endorse the minutes of the Australia Day Subcommittee – Merriwa District meeting held on 31 October 2023, 14 November 2023 and 16 January 2024.**

**Moved:** T Clout

**Seconded:** R Tindall

**CARRIED**

**ACTION FOR COMMITTEE:** Nil

### **CAC-M.02.4            Capital Works Projects - Merriwa**

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Merriwa Community Advisory Committee with an update on capital works projects in the Merriwa district.

Initial works have started on the MR358 project.

#### **RESOLVED**

**That Merriwa Community Advisory Committee note this report.**

**Moved:** T Clout

**Seconded:** S Thompson

**CARRIED**

**ACTION FOR COMMITTEE:** Nil

### **CAC-M.02.5            Merriwa Sportsground User Group Sub-Committee**

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to present the minutes of the Merriwa Sportsground User Group Sub-Committee meetings held on 13 November 2023 and 12 February 2024.

There was discussion about the priorities that were determined by the sub-committee. Of significant concern is the fence which requires urgent repairs. The fence provides a useful safety barrier between vehicle parking and the fields.

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the Committee:**

- 1. endorse the minutes of the Merriwa Sportsground User Group Sub-Committee held on 13 November 2023 provided in Attachment 1**
- 2. endorse the minutes of the Merriwa Sportsground User Group Sub-Committee held on 12 February 2024 provided in Attachment 2; and**
- 3. note the top 3 priorities for the Merriwa Sportsground User Group Sub-Committee that are to be actioned when funding becomes available.**

**Moved:** T Clout

**Seconded:** S Thompson

**CARRIED**

#### **RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL**

**That Council investigate options to fund the fence repair / replacement through the Merriwa Reserve fund, VPA money from the Energy developers or other alternative sources.**

**Moved:** P Ryan

**Seconded:** J Hegarty

**CARRIED**

**ACTION FOR COMMITTEE:** Nil

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to present the minutes of the Merriwa Showground Management Sub-Committee meetings held on 7 February 2024 and the AGM held on 7 February 2024.

The Committee discussed the capital works funds that have been allocated in the 23/24 DPOP to renovate the arena in the showground.

The Committee would also like to thank R Tindall for his contributions to the committee for many years, in the role of Chair. R. Tindall also thanked the Committee for their support, shared vision and achievements.

**RESOLVED**

**That the Committee endorse the minutes of the:**

- 1. Merriwa Showground Management Sub-Committee AGM held on 7 February 2024 provided in attachment 1; and**
- 2. Merriwa Showground Management Sub-Committee held on 7 February 2024 provided in attachment 2.**

**Moved:** P Ryan

**Seconded:** R Tindall

**CARRIED**

**RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL**

**That the capital works budget allocation in the 2023/24 DPOP for renovation of the showground arena, be moved to 2024/25 DPOP to allow additional time for these works.**

**Moved:** P Ryan

**Seconded:** R Tindall

**CARRIED**

**ACTION FOR COMMITTEE:** Nil

**6. ACTION SHEET**

Reviewed and updated at the meeting.

**7. CORRESPONDENCE**

Nil

**8. GENERAL BUSINESS**

- i. Tree planting – Committee members discussed the proposal to plant native trees beside the footpath in Roach St. Members may consider writing a submission to Council in relation to the 2024/25 DPOP to expand the tree planting budget in Merriwa.
- ii. Barricades between shared path and road – Committee members discussed the possibility of installing barricades or wheel-stops. Council will check the design to determine whether they have been included and investigate funding.
- iii. Open Streets Program - funding of up to \$150,000 to temporarily close streets to cars and open them for place-making events and activations. Can Council apply for this grant for a new event that will promote the area and encourage people to visit the town. Committee members agreed to communicate their project ideas via email and contact the Grants Officer to apply for funding.

**RESOLVED**

**That the Committee consider a project proposal and consult with the Grants Officer to submit a funding application.**

**Moved:** C Connell

**Seconded:** R Tindall

**CARRIED**

**9. CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS**

Nil

**10. NEXT MEETING**

21 May 2024

*The meeting was declared closed at 7.10pm.*

## Environmental & Community Services

### AGENDA ITEMS

**CAC-M.05.1**

***ACTION SHEET UPDATE***

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** *Amanda Catzikiris - Manager Community Services*

**AUTHOR:** *Nicolle Western - Sports Participation Officer*

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is for the Committee to review and consider items on the Action Sheet for the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Merriwa District.

### RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee note the issues and responses listed in the Action Sheet

### BACKGROUND

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is a Committee of Council and reports to Council. Actions that arise from the CAC – Merriwa District are recorded and updated in the Action Sheet.

### REPORT/PROPOSAL

District	Meeting Date	Issue	Response
Merriwa	14/8/23 20/02/24	Tidying of unmaintained yards in Cassilis. On-going concerns.	Council sent letters on 8 June 2023. Most property owners complied with Council's request by August 2023. Further complaints regarding overgrown properties will be investigated and appropriate action taken. J. Hegarty & S. Thompson to put CRMs with address details in about untidy property/s. 20.02.24 Committee members are encouraged to raise CRM. Greg McDonald will seek further clarification about the issue from Mat Pringle. 10/05/24 CRM's are actioned as they are received. There are no CRM's outstanding at present – this will be

Environmental & Community Services

			removed from the action sheet.
Merriwa	14/8/23	Merriwa RV Park	<p>The process for this project is to (1) seek Council approval (2) secure grant funding (3) engage consultant (4) community consultation (5) finalise concept plan (6) plan adopted by Council (7) secure/allocate funds for construction.</p> <p>16/11/23 - include silo picnic table &amp; solar lighting as part of this project/funding.</p> <p>10/05/2024 – Council is seeking consultant quotes for a masterplan for the entire precinct, which it aims to deliver in the 2024-25 financial year.</p>
Merriwa	14/8/23	S. Thompon to forward Golden Hwy traffic requests to Council's traffic committee and liaise with Transport for NSW.	S. Thompson to follow up with TfNSW. Council has forwarded the community request to TfNSW and will raise it at the next SMG meeting. However, there was a community letter requested at the last CAC meeting that has not been received yet.
Merriwa	14/8/23 20/02/24	Haynes Awning Cassilis - S.Thompson to follow up with local builders for quotes. M. Pringle to advise when quotes received.	At the April meeting Council resolved to: 1. enter into a Deed of Agreement with the property owner of 20 Branksome Street, Cassilis to allow Council to undertake awning rectification works and recover the cost of the works. 2. delegate authority to the General Manager to sign the Deed of Agreement. 3. accept the quotation from D.E. Brown & Sons (Coolah) Pty Ltd for the contract sum of \$40,254.50 inclusive of GST to carry out rectification works to the

**Environmental & Community Services**

			awning at 20 Branksome Street, Cassilis. 10/05/2024 Awaiting a signed Deed from the property owner.
<b>Merriwa</b>	16/11/23	Council to investigate whether any funding available from EPA or other sources to remediate Soil Depot site. If no funds available, Council to consider a co-contribution from the Merriwa Reserve Fund.	Council has written to the NSW Soil Conservation Service seeking financial assistance to remediate the site. They have no funds available. Council to seek grant funding. 10/05/2024 No funding sources identified at this stage, this will now be removed from the action sheet.
<b>Merriwa</b>	20/02/24	Request spraying of Golden Highway truck stop area in Cassilis with Upper Hunter Weeds Authority.	T. Clout to request spray treatment of spiny burr grass and cactus. 9/5/24 - The UHWA replied that Hunter Local Land services have engaged a contractor for spraying of weeds at the Cassilis truck stop. The Weeds Authority manager will follow up to see that spraying has or will be done.
<b>Merriwa</b>	20/02/24	RMS Bridge on King George V Drive – request for guard rail to increase safety of pedestrians	J. Hegarty to seek letters of support from school representatives addressed to General Manager. 8/5/24 No letters of support received so far.
<b>Merriwa</b>	20/02/24	Signage for the Town Beautification Project	R. Upadhyaya to work with C. Connell to explore options and seek quotes for signage using the balance of the town beautification fund. 16/05/2024 Rag has met with C. Connell to determine the type of signage required. Currently seeking quotes.
<b>Merriwa</b>	20/02/24	EV Charging Stations – funding for works	M. Pringle to investigate funding opportunities and consider suitable location for the station.

## Environmental & Community Services

			10/05/2024 A contribution of \$20,000 is required to fund the works. We currently do not have a budget for this work.
<b>Merriwa</b>	20/02/24	Cemetery Reserve – fire hazard	M. Pringle to raise the issue of fire hazard through Crown Lands Office. 10/05/2024 Referred to NSW RFS.
<b>Merriwa</b>	20/02/24	Silo Art Tourist Stop	M. Pringle to seek permission from ARTC to explore the proposal to install solar lights around the silo art. 10/05/2024 Correspondence sent to GrainCorp in April, awaiting a response.
<b>Merriwa</b>	20/02/24	Barricades between new shared path and road.	M. Pringle to check the design to determine whether they have been included and investigate funding. 10/05/2024 A road safety audit will be conducted to identify any requirements. The audit will be finalised by June 2024.

### OPTIONS

To adopt, reject or amend the recommendation.

### IMPLICATIONS

#### a. Financial Implications

NIL

#### b. Other Implications

NIL

### ATTACHMENTS

There are no enclosures for this report



## Environmental & Community Services

**CAC-M.05.2**

### **ITEMS RAISED BY THE COMMUNITY**

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** *Amanda Catzikiris - Manager Community Services*

**AUTHOR:** *Nicolle Western - Sports Participation Officer*

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to consider items submitted by committee members of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Merriwa District.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Committee review the items listed in the report.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is a committee of Council and reports to Council. Members of the CAC are invited to submit agenda items raised by community members of the Merriwa district prior to the meetings, for inclusion on the agenda.

### **REPORT/PROPOSAL**

#### **Questions from CAC members:**

1. Renewable Energy Proposals for Bettington Street.
  - a. How can the Merriwa community support Council with the lack of consultation around this issue?
  - b. Has Council thought of alternative proposals to put to Roads NSW and ACEN energy?

*Council Response: The Birriwa Solar Project team has revised the OSOM assessment for the project based on updated information and advised that works are no longer anticipated in Merriwa due to OSOM movements for the project.*

2. Golden Highway Issues
  - a. With traffic increases proposed, does Council have a long term program for upgrades required for this highway around potential safety issues that the community and Council can lobby for together?

*Council Response: This is a TfNSW asset and Council does not have any plans to upgrade. However, there are intersection upgrades happening at Cassilis Rd and Ringwood Rd that Council is aware of.*

- b. Does Council have information on the total value of this route to the State, as a major freight corridor? How will this freight be impacted by the cumulative renewable energy freight proposed?

*Council Response: This can be forwarded to TfNSW for response as Council does not have the data.*

## Environmental & Community Services

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### 3. Gummun Place

- a. Is it possible to receive minutes from this committee meeting to keep Merriwa CAC informed?

*Council response: The Hostel Committee meets bi-monthly. The minutes of the meeting are included in a report to the following Council meeting. Details of all Council meetings are available on the Council website.*

- b. Does employment of new manager now ensure that there will be a dedicated respite room and palliative care services?

*Council response: The Hostel is able to provide respite and palliative care to meet resident needs. Any available bed can be used for this purpose.*

### 4. Council Enterprises Review

- a. Does Council review all its enterprises to determine long term viability for community? (eg saleyards, aerodrome, Campbell's corner). This would include quantitative and qualitative aspects for the community.

*Council Response: Council reviews all of its business enterprises, not just those sustaining losses, on a regular basis with a view to make these business enterprises financially sustainable for the long term. For those businesses that are service based in the community whose cost is absorbed by the residents, such as an aerodrome, Council reviews these service entities in the same light as the business enterprises, however the focus for Council is to make these services as efficient and cost effective as possible.*

### 5. Daycare Availability

- a. How can Merriwa community work with council to increase day care availability as it is a major reason for workers not settling here?

*Council Response: Upper Hunter Family Daycare (UHFDC) have been successful in obtaining a grant which enables them to support on boarding new Educators that register with the scheme. If eligible they can receive a \$2500 start-up grant. So far UHFDC staff have attempted to attract new Educators through radio, Facebook, playgroup visits, a community open day and through staff at the Merriwa office. They are also looking into incentives for currently registered Educators to help with attracting new Educators to join the scheme.*

*UHFDC staff have spoken with local people and they feel that word of mouth is the best answer to getting the word out. If there are prominent platforms to do this, other than the ones listed above, they are certainly open to hearing about these.*

### 6. Community Communication

- a. Is it possible to get some Council support to revive a community newsletter?

*Council Response: Council is currently investigating the possibility of creating a digital newsletter to support information sharing of Council activities throughout the entire Shire. Council has offered a room to the newsletter "editors" for their use.*

### 7. Has any progress been made in obtaining permission for the solar lights at the Merriwa silo art from the ARTC or Graincorp. If so are there any costings for this project?

*Council Response: The Director Environmental & Community Services reached out to Graincorp in April and is awaiting a response.*

## **Environmental & Community Services**

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### ***OPTIONS***

To adopt, reject or amend the recommendations.

### ***IMPLICATIONS***

#### **a. Financial Implications**

Nil.

#### **b. Other Implications**

Nil.

### ***ATTACHMENTS***

Nil.

## Infrastructure Services

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**CAC-M.05.3**

### ***CAPITAL WORKS PROJECTS - MERRIWA***

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** *Rag Upadhyaya - Director Infrastructure Services*

**AUTHOR:** *Anna Brennan - Infrastructure Support Officer*

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Merriwa Community Advisory Committee with an update on capital works projects in the Merriwa district.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Merriwa Community Advisory Committee note this report.

### **REPORT/PROPOSAL**

The attached report provides information on capital works projects in the Merriwa district for the 2023/24 year.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- 1  Grants and Capital Works Delivery Spreadsheet

Project Name	Summary Scope / deliverables	Project Value	Funding Amount & Source	Estimated Completion Date	Schedule Status Comment	Activities for Next Three Months
Bridges - Bobialla Creek Bridge	Replacement of timber bridge with concrete bridge	\$ 1,321,722.00	\$1,291,722 Fixing Country Bridges \$30,000 UHSC	May-24	Completed	Install guard rail on approaches.
Comilia Road Rehabilitation		\$ 450,000.00	UHSC	Jun-24	Completed	
Cullingral Road Rehabilitation		\$ 215,000.00	Flood Recovery	Jun-24	Completed	Ongoing
Merriwa Town Beautification	Based on 2016 Masterplan	\$ 200,000.00	SCCR5	FY- 24 to 25	On track	Under tree lighting, footpath engraving, planting missing tree, wheel stoppers, flag poles for tourism. Additional funds to Vennacher St lights contingency and project management signage works.
MR358 - Coulsons Creek Rd Rehabilitation		\$ 48,260,000.00	State \$9,660,000 Federal \$38,600,000	FY- 25 to 26	On track	Commence gabion wall construction and Section 3 earthworks.
NSW Betterment Program - Causeways	Sophia Creek Road Upper Dartbrook Road Kars Springs Road Hampshire Road Moonan Brook Road Avocado Road Glenroy Road Possum Springs Road Roma Road Mount Erin Road Yarrowonga Road Nandowra Road Dales Creek Road Sargeants Gap Road Middlebrook Road Flight Springs Road Ridglands Road	\$ 1,872,000.00	NSW Betterment Program	FY 2025 -2026	Awaiting approval	With TfNSW for approval
NSW Betterment Program - Drainage	Flaggs Road Lettybrook Road Upper Rouchel Road Summerhill Road Rosebud Road Studleigh Road Upper Dartbrook Road Mount Erin Road Kars Springs Road Brawboy Road Rotherwood Road Coolah Road Ridglands Road Avocado Road Yarrowonga Road Middlebrook Road	\$ 698,490.00	NSW Betterment Program	FY 2025 -2026	Awaiting approval	With TfNSW for approval
Public Cemeteries – Tree Planting	Tree planting in all cemeteries across the Shire	\$ 5,000.00	UHSC	Jun-24	Completed	Funds exhausted for FY 23/24

Project Name	Summary Scope / deliverables	Project Value	Funding Amount & Source	Estimated Completion Date	Schedule Status Comment	Activities for Next Three Months
Street Lighting	Lighting over pedestrian crossing located Vennacher Street Merriwa	\$ 82,000.00	UHSC SCCR4 \$218,904	Jun-24	On track	Contract awarded - expected to be completed in Jun-24
Swimming Pools - Merriwa Pool Amenities Upgrade	Upgrade to amenities	\$ 218,904.00	UHSC \$40,000	Sep-23	Completed	
Waste Management - Merriwa Transfer Station	Development of new transfer station.	\$ 278,801.00	UHSC	Jun-23	On track	Specialist studies to be carried out

FUNDING SOURCE SUMMARY	
DCP	Drought Communities Programme
SCCF	Stronger Country Communities
R4R	Resources for Regions
LRCIF	Local Roads & Community Infrastructure
CRIF	Crown Reserved Improvement Fund
BLERF	Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund
SSWP	Safe & Secure Water Programme
RNSW	Restart NSW
CRSUP	Driver Reviver Sites Upgrade Program
CPTIGS	Country Passenger Transport Infrastructure Grants Scheme

## Environmental & Community Services

**CAC-M.05.4**

### **MERRIWA BYPASS SUBMISSION**

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** *Mathew Pringle - Director Environmental & Community Services*

**REPORT PREPARED BY:** *Amanda Catzikiris - Manager Community Services*

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to review the submission from Merriwa District Progress Association regarding removing heavy vehicles from Bettington St, Merriwa.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Committee provide Council with comments and suggestions to be included in a response to the Merriwa Progress Association in relation to the Merriwa Heavy Vehicle bypass.

## **BACKGROUND**

The committee has not considered this matter previously.

## **REPORT/PROPOSAL**

Council has received a submission from the Merriwa District Progress Association for the heavy vehicle bypass of Merriwa. The submission is attached for the Community Advisory Committee's consideration.

At present Council has a heavy vehicle bypass route consisting of the existing road network, however the submission is read as requesting a separate road constructed as part of the Golden Highway to enable complete bypassing of the township. This essentially will result in not only a heavy vehicle bypass but an all vehicle bypass.

Considerations of the proposal (both positive and negative) should take into account:

1. The impact a bypass will have on smaller businesses that presently rely on through traffic.
2. Funding will need to come from the State and Federal governments as Council has no funds for this scale of project.
3. Benefits to the main street by having less traffic.

The CAC are encouraged to review the submission attached and provide comments for Council's consideration and response.

## **OPTIONS**

To adopt, reject or amend the recommendation.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **a. Financial Implications**

Nil

## Environmental & Community Services

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### b. Other Implications

Nil

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- 1 [↓](#) Request to Council - Removing Heavy Vehicles from Bettington St, Merriwa
- 2 [↓](#) The Case for Removing Heavy Vehicles from Bettington St, Merriwa





Mr G McDonald  
General Manager  
Upper Hunter Shire Council  
PO Box 208  
Scone NSW 2337

**Removing Heavy Vehicles from Bettington Street Merriwa**

Dear Greg

The Merriwa District Progress Association (MDPA) shares the concerns of local residents and visitors to Merriwa that the quantity of heavy vehicles passing through Merriwa CBD is increasing significantly, creating excessive noise, smell, dust, and poses a real safety risk to pedestrians, children, the elderly and pets, even if travelling at the prescribed speed limit of 50 kph. Therefore, we would like your support to have Transport NSW investigate various options for a bypass / heavy vehicle detour / or heavy vehicle alternative to remove heavy vehicles from Bettington Street Merriwa.

We are submitting the attached case to justify why we believe trucks should be encouraged to avoid the Merriwa CBD.

We do not wish the priority of this request to be elevated by a traffic accident involving a heavy vehicle in Bettington Street causing death or serious injury. The time to begin a study into feasibility options is now.

Any assistance you can provide in encouraging Transport NSW to undertake this study would be sincerely appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Gowlland  
President

Sunday, 5 May 2024

Copy to:

All Upper Hunter Shire Councillors

Mat Pringle, Director of Environmental and Community Services

Rag Upadhyaya, Director of Infrastructure Services

---

**MERRIWA DISTRICT PROGRESS ASSOCIATION INC.**

PO Box 144  
Merriwa NSW 2329

ABN: 59 244 901 419

mdpa.org.au  
merriwaprogress@gmail.com

# THE CASE FOR REMOVING HEAVY VEHICLES FROM BETTINGTON STREET MERRIWA

## 1. The Golden Highway

The Golden Highway (B84) links the greater Hunter and Sydney with the western portion of New South Wales, from Belford to Dubbo. Transport NSW describes the Golden Highway as:

*... a 313 kilometre long rural highway, mostly with single lanes, connecting the New England Highway at Belford in the Hunter Valley to the Newell Highway at Dubbo via Denman, Merriwa and Dunedoo.*

*The route has been identified as an important connection between the Central West and the Port of Newcastle. There is also a State target to facilitate the movement of high productivity vehicles on the highway in the long term due to the constraints that make such a connection between the Central West and Sydney via the Great Western Highway less cost effective.*

The **NSW Heavy Vehicle Access Policy Framework** (Sept 2018) explores freight access across the Great Dividing Range by consideration of the Golden Highway for access by PBS 2B vehicles (heavy vehicles up to 30 m in length). Regional networks are also important for connectivity, as illustrated by Figure 1 below, which shows the relative importance of the Golden Highway as a freight corridor. The policy also identifies there is an interest in access from west of the dividing range to the Port of Newcastle via the Golden Highway for agricultural products.



Figure 1 - The Golden Highway is an important connection in the Regional transport network

The policy also identifies the strategic priority for access by PBS 2B vehicles on the Hume, Pacific and Golden Highways, as Figure 2 illustrates. These three major freight corridors in NSW provide significant freight flows within the state and across the borders. The NSW strategic freight objective is to provide access for PBS 2B vehicles on these freight routes as they progressively become suitable for use by these combinations.



Figure 2 - The Golden Highway is one of three identified strategic priority highways for access by PBS 2B vehicles

The **NSW Freight and Ports Plan 2018 - 2023** mentions that the Port of Newcastle is planning to diversify and expand the port's trade base. The current arrangements ... allow for the growth of container volumes through Newcastle that service the region. Note that the Port of Newcastle is now an approved shipping container handling port. This classification is surely likely to increase the flow of freight along the Golden Highway through Merriwa to the port.

## 2. Traffic Volume Monitoring

Merriwa is a gateway to the Hunter Valley and also to the Central West and Orana Regions. With its location on the Golden Highway and other regional roads, Merriwa is a hub of transport routes, as Figure 3 illustrates. So it should be no surprise that the volume of traffic through Merriwa is high and ever-increasing.



Figure 3 - Merriwa is a hub of transport routes



A study of traffic flow through Merriwa for the period 6 December 2019 to 6 March 2020 conducted by the Upper Hunter Traffic Committee found that 2425 cars and 515 trucks passed through Bettington Street every day on average over the 90 day study period. Table 1 below lists the volume of movements for each category of vehicle recorded during the monitoring period.

Table 1 - Number of vehicles recorded passing through Bettington Street per vehicle type			
Vehicle Type	Class	Count	Sub-total
Cars	1	207,851	218,244
Car + trailer, boat or c/van	2	10,393	
Truck / bus not articulated	3, 4, 5	29,764	46,307
Articulated truck	6, 7, 8, 9	8,717	
B-double truck	10	7,390	
Road train	11, 12	436	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>264,551</b>	<b>264,551</b>

VEHICLE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM	
AUSTROADS : January 1994	
Class	LIGHT VEHICLES
1	SHORT Car, Van, Wagon, 4WD, Utility, Bicycle, Motorcycle
2	SHORT - TOWING Trailer, Caravan, Boat
HEAVY VEHICLES	
3	TWO AXLE TRUCK OR BUS ( 2 axles )
4	THREE AXLE TRUCK OR BUS ( 3 axles, 2 groups )
5	FOUR AXLE TRUCK ( 4 axles, 2 groups )
6	THREE AXLE ARTICULATED ( 3 axles, 3 groups )
7	FOUR AXLE ARTICULATED ( 4 axles, 3 or 4 groups )
8	FIVE AXLE ARTICULATED ( 5 axles, 3 to 5 groups )
9	SIX AXLE ARTICULATED ( 6 axles, 3 to 6 groups 7+ axles, 3 groups )
10	B DOUBLE ( 7+ axles, 4 groups )
11	DOUBLE ROAD TRAIN ( 7+ axles, 5 or 6 groups )
12	TRIPLE ROAD TRAIN ( 7+ axles, 7+ groups )

Figure 4 - Vehicle classification system

In February 2023, the Merriwa District Progress Association (MDPA) asked the Upper Hunter Shire Council (UHSC) for a copy of any information they held on the quantity of traffic passing through Merriwa. Figure 5 shows the location of the traffic meters Council used to collect the traffic data.



Figure 5 - Location of traffic meters utilised by Upper Hunter Shire Council

Figure 6 below shows the average number of cars and trucks passing through Merriwa every day that were recorded by Council at the locations shown above. Note that the first data records are from May 2011. It is apparent that the number of vehicles passing through Merriwa has increased discernibly since 2011. In fact, by the end of 2022, the number of cars increased by 52%, and the number of heavy vehicles increased by 10%.

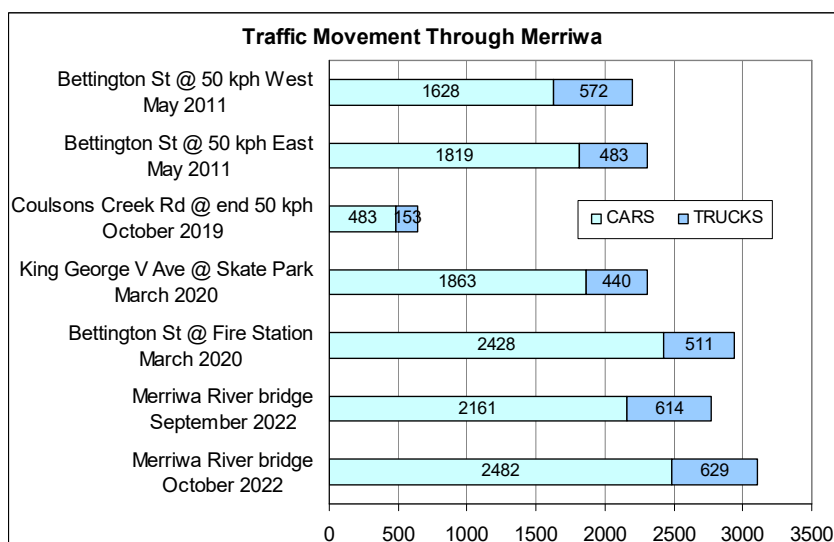


Figure 6 - Average vehicles daily movements at various locations in Merriwa over an eleven year period

The Transport NSW Traffic Volume Monitor (Point to Point Camera) approximately 3.5 kilometres east of Merriwa records the number of vehicles that pass by every day. Figure 7 indicates the average volume of traffic per day recorded since 2015. Although the number of cars is down in 2020 and 2021, likely due to COVID-19 lockdown, the number of trucks passing through Merriwa increased by 57 %.

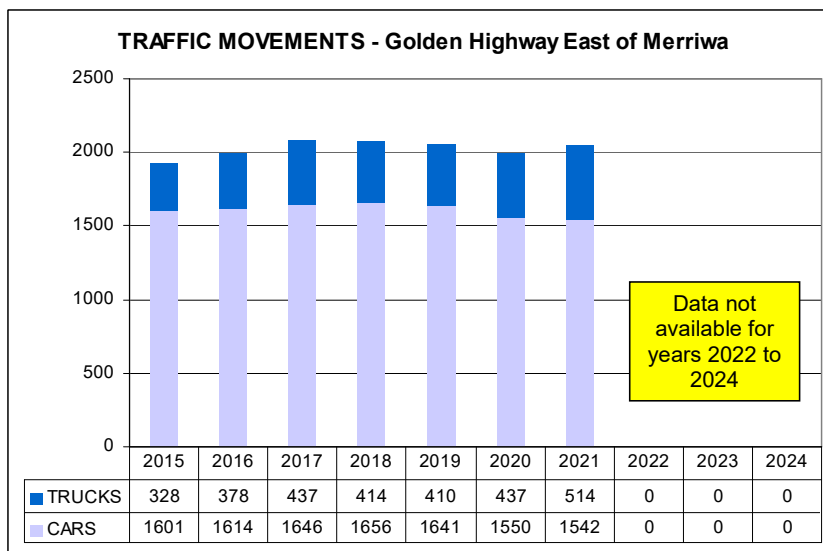


Figure 7 - The Traffic Volume Monitor east of Merriwa shows an increase in the number of vehicles on the Golden Highway

As this monitoring apparatus is located east of Vennacher Street, it does not account for traffic from the west of Merriwa heading towards Scone or Willow Tree, or in the opposite direction. Therefore, the number of cars and heavy vehicles passing through Merriwa's CBD has not been fully assessed.

Many heavy vehicles (semi-trailers and B-doubles), including a large number of OSOM (over size over mass) vehicles traverse the Golden Highway through Merriwa, hauling freight and specialised loads to coal mines in the Hunter Valley and the Central West (eg: Ulan). This includes many B-double tankers hauling diesel for use in the coal mines. A significant quantity of freight destined for western New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia is believed to pass through Merriwa on the Golden Highway. Furthermore, the large amount of freight trucked through Merriwa is expected to significantly increase upon the completion of the Inland Rail Project, which is designed to link Melbourne and Brisbane.

The Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (CWO REZ) is proposed to contain 45 renewable energy facilities, made up of: 26 solar farms; 9 wind farms; 7 battery energy supply stations (BESS); 3 energy hubs; at least 1 switching station and 1 workers camp, as listed in Table 3 and show in Figure 8.

Table 3 - Energy Generation Projects in Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone		
Solar Farm	Solar Farm (cont'd)	Battery (BESS)
Gilgandra - Oxley Hwy	Sandy Creek	Narromine
Gilgandra	Dapper	Apsley
Burroway	Beryl	Wellington Town
Wahroonga	Tallawang	Wellington South
Forest Glen	Stubbo	Orana
South Keswick (Dubbo)	Narragamba	Bellambi Heights
Sheraton Road	Birriwa	Birriwa
Wellington Road		
Burrundulla	Wind Farm	Energy Hub
Blain Road	Uungula	Narromine
Ulan	Burrendong	Elong Elong
Dunedoo	Piambong	Merotherie
Guerie	Liverpool Range	
Suntop	Valley of the Winds	Switching Station
Narromine	Bodangara	Wollar
Maryvale	Spicers Creek	
Wellington North	Orana	Workers Camp
Wellington	Barney's Reef	Neeleys Lane
Cobbora		

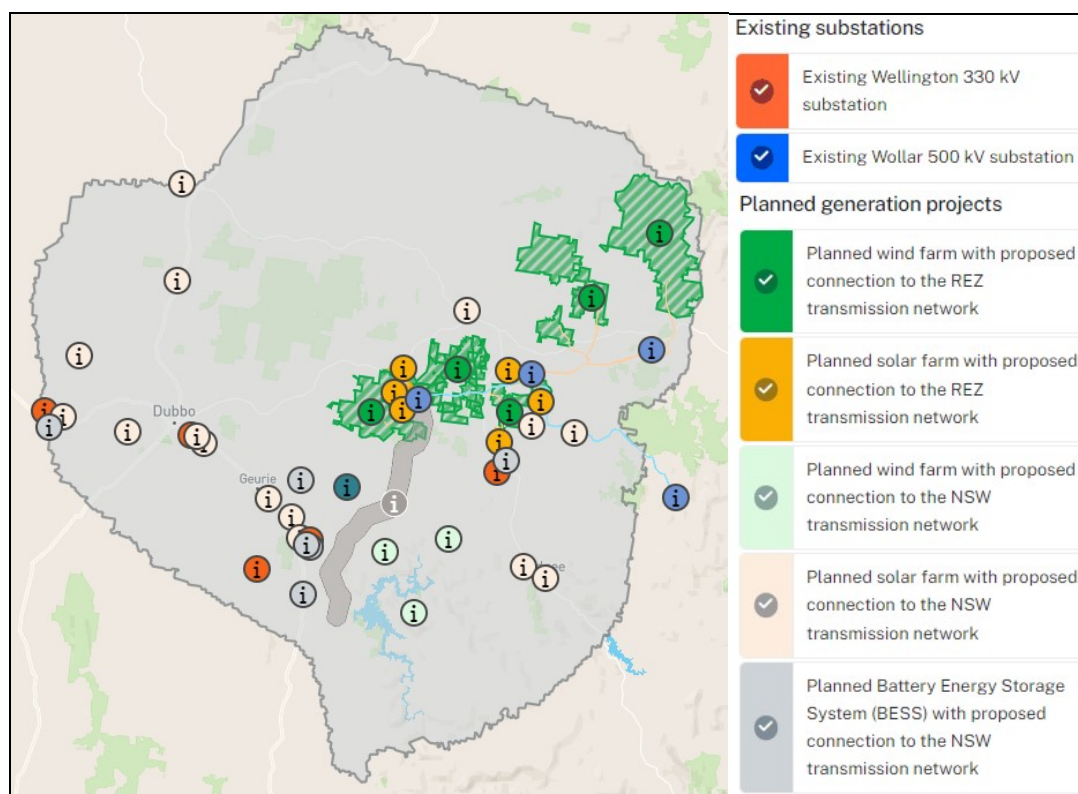


Figure 8 - The approximate location of renewable energy generation infrastructure as part of the CWO REZ

EnergyCo describes the CWO REZ as follows.

- The REZ will initially unlock at least 4.5 gigawatts of new network capacity by the mid-2020s.
- New transmission infrastructure will enable generators (such as solar and wind farms) participating in the REZ to export electricity to the rest of the network.
- It is expected to bring up to \$10 billion in private investment to the Central-West Orana region by 2030.
- At its peak, this REZ is expected to support around 5,000 construction jobs in the region.

Data supplied by ACEN and lightsourcebp indicate that large numbers of heavy vehicles will be travelling to these energy generation facilities every hour, as Table 4 shows. Because there are approximately 45 projects to be constructed, this figure can be extrapolated across a potential construction period of 10 to 20 years. Note that the Goulburn River Solar Farm lies outside the CWO REZ, but heavy vehicles travelling to this site will still pass through Merriwa.

Table 4 - Estimated heavy vehicle movements per hour for selected solar farms	
Development Project	Heavy Vehicle Movements Per Hour
Wellington North Solar Farm	19
Sundown Solar Farm	20
Stubbo Solar Farm	6
Birriwa Solar Farm	25
Goulburn River Solar Farm	20

At the rate of say 20 heavy vehicles per hour per 'farm', and assuming at least three of the 'farms' will be under construction at any one time, there will be 60 heavy vehicle movements per hour. If you include the current truck movements through Merriwa, being 28 movements per hour (extrapolated from the Point to Point data per day and limited to 20 hours per day), this means that approximately 88 trucks will be passing through the Merriwa CBD every hour, or one every one and a half minutes.

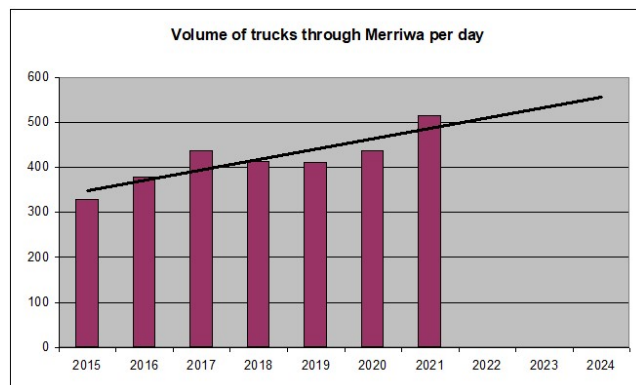


Figure 9 - Extrapolated Point to Point data of heavy vehicle movements

The **Golden Highway Corridor Strategy of October 2016** predicts a 79% increase in the number of heavy vehicles passing through Merriwa to 620 per day over the period 2011 to 2031. However, the strategy may not have accounted for the creation of the CWO REZ and the increase in heavy vehicle movements associated with construction and maintenance of all the energy generation facilities within.

During construction of the Bodangora Wind Farm (15 km east of Wellington) in 2018, over 300 wide loads transported wind turbine components through Merriwa for 33 towers. The approved Liverpool Range Wind Farm will have 272 wind turbines, requiring approximately 2,600 wide load truck movements through Merriwa from the port of Newcastle, and an equal quantity of return trips. Transport NSW estimates this number to be closer to 6,000 movements.

Verdant Earth Technologies plans to transform the Redbank Power Station near Singleton into a bioenergy hub powered by woody weeds from properties near Cobar under an approved program to control invasive native scrub (INS). It is estimated there are millions of tonnes of INS around the Cobar region, a problem farmers have been battling for years. The company said it would process about 700,000 tonnes of dried biomass each year, powering about 200,000 homes. The most direct route from Cobar to Redbank is along the Golden Highway through Merriwa. If each truck carries 30 tonnes of biomass per trip on only weekdays, there would be approximately 90 loaded truck movements per day through Merriwa and another 90 return trips.



The NSW telematics data, illustrated in Figure 10, shows that the Golden Highway carried between 10,000 and 50,000 heavy transport vehicles in 2018. It is the second highest category for vehicle numbers monitored using this system. An explanation of NSW Telematics appears below.

#### NSW Telematics

**The interactive telematics visualisation shows heavy vehicle counts on roads in NSW.**

The data currently covers heavy vehicles enrolled in the Intelligent Access Program (IAP), which is a telematics application used for high productivity vehicles and Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) in NSW.

The IAP is a national program developed in partnership with all Australian road agencies. It uses satellite tracking and wireless communication technology to remotely monitor where, when and how heavy vehicles are being operated on the road network.

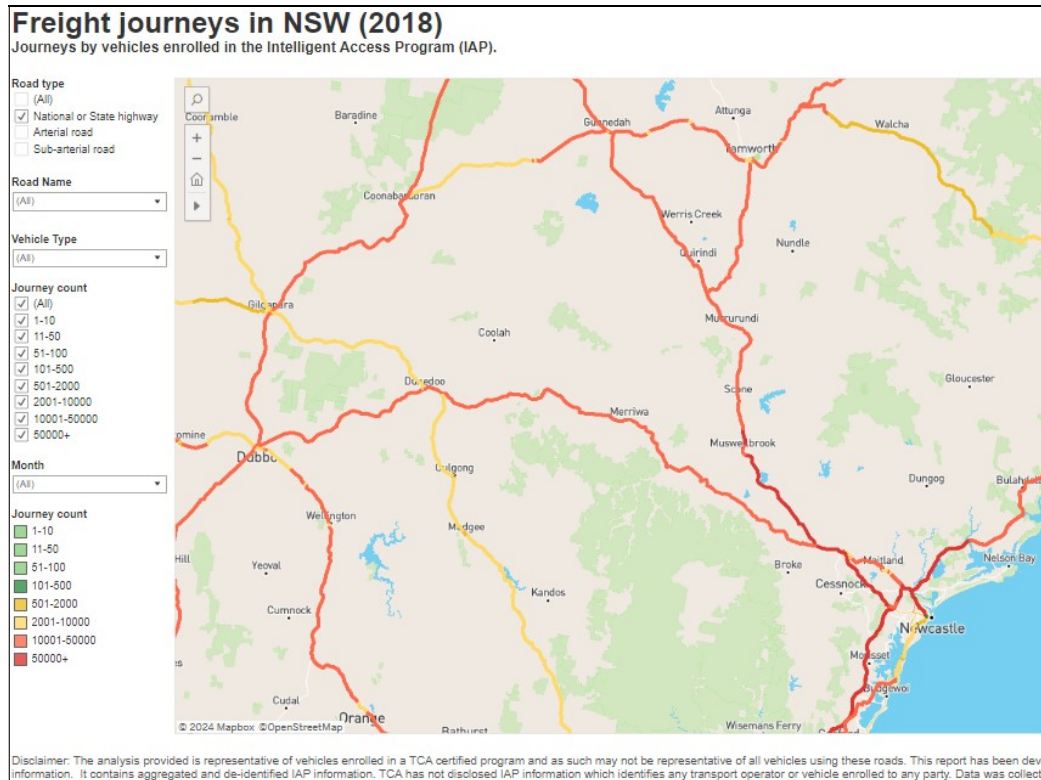


Figure 10 - Telematics show the Golden Highway has the second highest rating for heavy vehicle usage

Table 5 compiles data on the movement of heavy vehicles through Merriwa from previous traffic monitoring surveys and estimates of increased traffic movements from upcoming projects. It illustrates that there is likely to be an increase of an estimated 67.5 heavy vehicle movements through Merriwa per hour from the current quantity, which many visitors and residents find undesirable. Therefore, the quantity of heavy vehicle movements through Bettington Street Merriwa is predicted to increase to such an extent that the street is heavily congested for an extended period of time and that the safety of other motorists, visitors and local residents is at serious risk.

Table 5 - Estimated quantity of heavy vehicles passing through Bettington Street Merriwa		
Source of Data	Heavy Vehicle Movements per Day	Heavy Vehicle Movements per Hour
Upper Hunter Traffic Committee	515	
Traffic Volume Meter (extrapolated)	560	
UHSC @ Merriwa River	620	
Traffic Monitoring (Averaged from above)	565	23.5
Central West Renewable Energy Zone (Avg)	1440	60
Redbank biofuel project	180	7.5
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2184</b>	<b>91</b>



### 3. Pedestrian and Vehicle Safety

Merriwa is a popular and important tourist stopover for travellers on the Golden Highway, providing rest, refreshments, food, fuel and personal comfort facilities. Bettington Street, in the CBD offers the majority of these services in town. Livestock trucks transporting cattle (predominantly, but also sheep and pigs) through Merriwa often cause offensive odours to linger in the town, which is developing an alfresco dining culture for tourists and locals alike. By providing an alternative route around Merriwa this would not occur, and any dung and urine spilling from cattle trucks would not pollute the main street.

The study of traffic flow through Merriwa between 6 December 2019 and 6 March 2020 found that 864 (29%) of the 2425 cars and 515 trucks passing through Bettington Street every day were travelling at greater than the posted 50 kph speed limit. Table 6 shows that 12,411 heavy vehicles exceeded the posted speed limit of 50 kph during that time.

Table 6 - Vehicle speed statistics	
Posted speed limit	50 kph
Average speed (85%)	53.2 kph
Maximum speed	155 kph
Average (85%) overspeed	60 - 62 kph
Time speed highest	4:00 AM to 6:00 AM
Cars (1 - 2) overspeed	65,354
Trucks (3 - 12) overspeed	12,411
Vehicles per day (Mon-Fri)	3082
Vehicles per day (Sat-Sun)	2583

Figure 11 shows that the highest number of vehicles were recorded travelling at a speed lower than the limit, which is consistent with the recognition that this is a busy tourist and commercial precinct, encroached upon by speeding heavy vehicles.

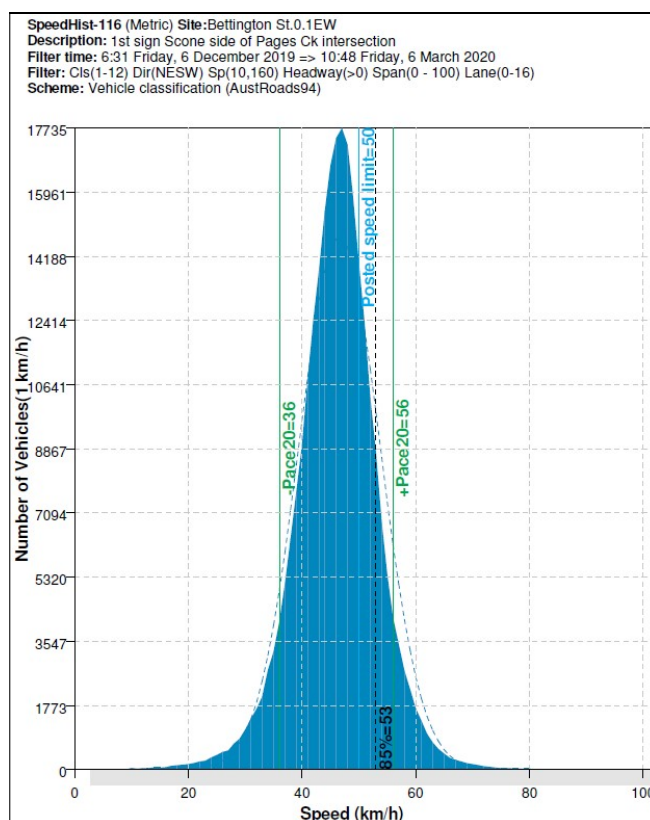


Figure 11 - The majority of vehicles passing through Merriwa travel at less than the prescribed 50 kph

The Golden Highway passes through five townships (Jerrys Plains, Denman, Sandy Hollow, Merriwa, and Dunedoo), but Merriwa is the only township where the highway is also the main street, with houses and business premises on both sides only separated from the roadway by the width of the footpaths. The proximity provides very little buffering for accident avoidance. Emergency situations, where a driver attempts to avoid a hazard (child, scooter or vehicle) on the road could likely result in damage, death and injury. The MDPA believes the increasing volume of traffic (especially heavy vehicles) passing through Merriwa poses a significantly greater risk to the safety of the general public. A bypass or diversion around Merriwa would reduce the risk of a truck accident in the main street.

As the Golden Highway is a B-double approved route, many of these trucks are very long, carry very heavy loads, and take a long distance to stop, especially in an emergency. Furthermore, the Golden Highway has been identified by the NSW Strategic Freight Objective as a major freight corridor in NSW, which is to provide access for PBS 2B vehicles. These heavy vehicles can be up to 30 metres in length and weigh up to 85.5 tonnes, thereby posing a greater danger to the public.

Although the speed limit of 50 kph applies to all streets in Merriwa, including the Golden Highway, many vehicles, including heavy transport vehicles regularly exceed this speed limit. The ability of a heavy vehicle to stop in an emergency to avoid a pedestrian, child or senior citizen is severely reduced by their large payload and the speed at which they are travelling. If an OSOM vehicle had to make an emergency stop, it would not be unreasonable to witness a heavy load (eg: excavation / mining equipment) break free of its chains destroying the prime mover and any other object or individual in the path of that truck.

There have been many occasions where truck drivers have abused other motorists (by blasting with their air horn or verbally) for stopping in Bettington Street to perform a legitimate 45° angle reverse park. Although it may be inconvenient for trucks to stop for pedestrians on crossings and to reverse park, they have no right to criticise anyone for conducting commercial or social activities in the CBD of this rural township.

Even at the current volume of heavy traffic flowing through Merriwa, many ambulant locals are reluctant to cross the street for fear of being run over. It is often difficult to find a safe gap in the traffic for even more adventurous pedestrians to cross.

#### **4. Free Flow of Heavy Vehicles**

Heavy vehicles travelling through Merriwa are often 'inconveniently' stopped in the main street by cars negotiating reverse 45° angle parking, and also by pedestrian traffic on the two zebra crossings in town. A bypass would allow heavy vehicles (including wide loads) to avoid the congestion of the Merriwa CBD, thereby allowing the free movement of freight along the Golden Highway.

It should be noted that many heavy vehicles (especially B-doubles) have great difficulty negotiating corners in the CBD. A good example is the corner of Bettington Street and Vennacher Street (Figure 12) where B-double cattle trucks (as well as hay trucks and general freight) headed to Scone must encroach quite some distance onto the opposite side of the road to negotiate a left turn around the corner of the Royal Hotel.



Figure 12 - Intersection of Golden Highway and Vennacher Street

Extremely wide loads are often transported through Merriwa. Some OSOM (over size over mass) vehicles pass through the CBD (often stopping all traffic and occupying the whole road). The current alternative route around Bettington Street (shown in Figure 13) includes four sharp corners, which many rigs have great difficulty negotiating. This is particularly so for very long loads and very heavy loads on massive low-loaders (some of which are unable to use this route). On very infrequent occasions, the intersection of Blaxland Street and Bow Street floods so that it is impassable for any vehicles.

A recent proposal by ACEN to (temporarily) remove 11 parking spaces in Bettington Street and to permanently destroy ornamental trees and a parking bay 'blister' caused severe outrage and alarm

from the local community. District based organisations have made representations to government agencies, Ministers and the proponent to ask for this proposal to be abandoned and an alternative solution explored. This reinforces the position that the local community does not wish to have heavy vehicles pass through the CBD in Bettington Street Merriwa.

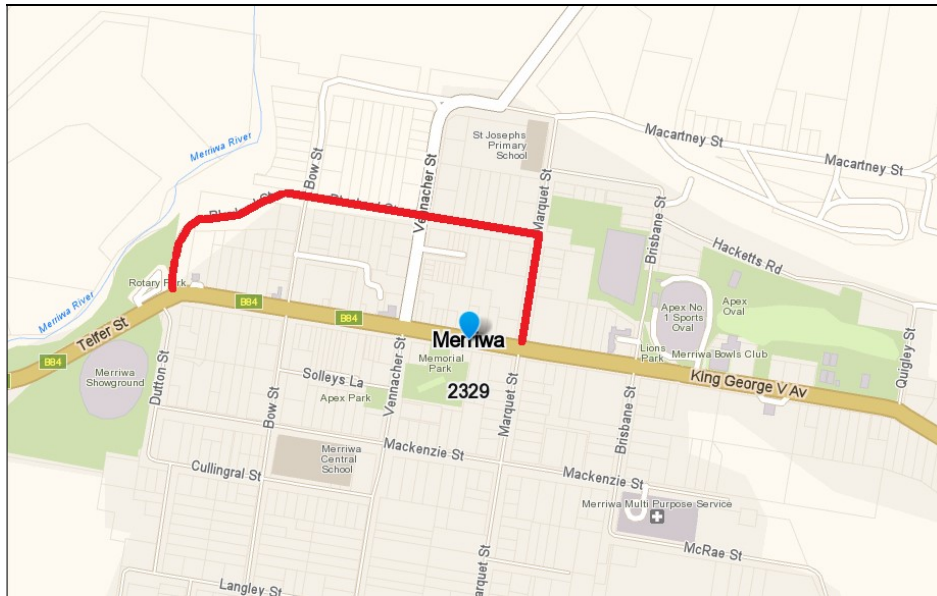


Figure 13 - The current heavy vehicle diversion around Bettington Street Merriwa

## 5. Social and Economic Impact

Some businesses in Merriwa are concerned that they could lose business if a bypass or heavy vehicle diversion was built around Merriwa. To address these concerns, we would ask that Transport NSW include a Social and Economic Analysis for any options identified for removing heavy vehicles from Bettington Street.

The RMS defines a bypass as "a road or highway that diverts around a town, and takes the flow of through traffic away from the town". They say "The benefits can be removing some traffic congestion in the town, reducing noise and vibration and improving road safety. An improved town amenity can, combined with other initiatives, make a town centre more attractive to visitors".

*The issues that communities face include changed access arrangements and the potential loss of trade to some business that are more dependent on passing trade. This may alter economic activity that could result with through traffic no longer making a decision once they reach the town centre to pull over to take a break and in doing so spend money.*

It is imperative that any study into heavy vehicle detour / bypass options includes a comprehensive social and economic impact assessment.

## 6. A Heavy Vehicle Servicing Centre in Merriwa?

The MDPA has applied for a grant under the **regional Precincts and Partnerships Program** (rPPP) from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, to fund a feasibility study into the viability of a wool processing plant (eg: scouring, carbonising, etc), a wool storage facility, and a heavy vehicle servicing centre somewhere in or near Merriwa. The MDPA has partnered with **The Stable** to lodge this application and to conduct the feasibility study if the grant application is approved. The heavy vehicle servicing centre would optimistically comprise: a rest area; overnight parking; driver exchange; food and refreshments; fuel; battery charging or exchange; minor or major truck repairs; and other facilities as required. This proposed precinct would not only service semi-trailers and B-doubles, but also OSOM convoys.

We ask that this precinct concept be considered as part of any investigation into potential heavy vehicle diversion options around Bettington Street.

## 7. Exploring Options to Remove Heavy Vehicles from Bettington Street Merriwa

The likely need for a heavy vehicle bypass around Merriwa was identified several years ago. Merriwa residents and visitors find the noise of heavy vehicles braking and accelerating a challenge, they deplore the foul stench of cattle trucks passing through the Merriwa CBD and cringe at the potential risk to life by the apparent excessive speed at which many vehicles (including heavy trucks) travel through this congested area.

On 25 October 2017, the Merriwa District Progress Association (MDPA) held a public meeting to discuss the idea of a bypass around Merriwa. The concept received majority support from those at the meeting, but there was doubt about what form a bypass might take.

On 7 August 2019, the MDPA met with (then) Roads and Maritime Service's (RMS) Anna Zycki, Regional Director and Paul Maclaughlan, Senior Manager of Regional Planning to discuss various issues including a potential bypass. Ms Zycki said that a mid-term review of the *Golden Highway Corridor Strategy 2016* could consider the option of a bypass around Merriwa.

In July 2020, the MDPA wrote to: Mr Michael Johnsen MP, Member for the Upper Hunter; The Hon. Andrew Constance MP, Minister for Transport and Roads; The Hon. Paul Toole MP, Minister for Regional Transport and Roads; Ms A Zycki, Regional Director, Roads and Maritime Service; The General Manager, Upper Hunter Shire Council; and The Officer in Charge, Upper Hunter Traffic Committee seeking their support for a study to identify options for a heavy vehicle bypass around Merriwa. The Hon. Paul Toole replied to Michael Johnsen a few weeks later with the following response, promising that Transport NSW would work with the UHSC to explore options to manage freight and urban amenity in Merriwa. To date (May 2024), this has not occurred.

Dear Mr Johnsen

Thank you for your correspondence on behalf of Mr Col Bates, President of Merriwa District Progress Association, about a heavy vehicle bypass of Merriwa. I note Mr Bates also wrote to the Minister for Transport and Roads on this matter and trust he will accept this as a response to both approaches.

I appreciate the reasons which prompted Mr Bates to write.

I am advised there are currently no plans for a bypass or heavy vehicle detour of Merriwa. However, Transport for NSW acknowledges there are opportunities to better manage the competing demands of freight and urban amenity in Merriwa and is supportive of engaging with Upper Hunter Shire Council and the community to explore options. Any proposal would need to be carefully considered to ensure the impacts to all road users are clearly understood and would also need to compete for funding against other projects around the State.

On 29 October 2021, the MDPA attended a special meeting at the Upper Hunter Shire Council office in Scone attended by Paul Maclaughlan and Michael Papadopoulos of Transport NSW and Council's General Manager, Greg McDonald, and Council's Jeff Bush. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the concept of considering options for a heavy vehicle detour or bypass around Merriwa. The outcomes of that meeting were summarised as follows.

1. Transport NSW advises the *Golden Highway Corridor Strategy* is scheduled to be reviewed next financial year. Therefore, planning for options for a potential heavy vehicle detour or bypass around Merriwa can be carried out by Transport NSW over the next 12 to 18 months.
2. Transport NSW recognises the importance of the Golden Highway as a freight corridor. Improvements to the flow of traffic along this highway can only benefit freight movements, especially with the likely increased numbers of trucks upon the completion of the inland rail corridor.
3. Transport NSW foreshadows the introduction of larger, more modern heavy vehicles using the Golden Highway. Those vehicles are deemed to be longer, heavier and safer on the roads, with better brakes and GPS tracking.
4. Transport NSW estimates that approximately 6,000 OSOM (over size over mass) vehicles will pass through Merriwa during construction of the Liverpool Range Wind



- Farm alone. This number of OSOM movements is in addition to other heavy vehicles (eg: B-doubles) transporting general freight, livestock, hay and fuel, as well as OSOM vehicles transporting mining equipment and components.
5. Transport NSW and / or Council are to study the operation of 'bubbles' in Merriwa for traffic control. Many heavy vehicles have been observed having difficulty negotiating corners around these bubbles, and have consequently encroached significantly onto oncoming traffic lanes, posing a greater risk of motor vehicles accidents.
  6. Transport NSW recognises the importance of maximising the safety of residents and visitors to Merriwa, especially in the often crowded and congested CBD. Of prime importance to the residents of Merriwa is the safety of pedestrians and shoppers in the CBD with heavy vehicles travelling at speed only metres from them.
  7. Upper Hunter Shire Council is to install a traffic counter at the bridge over the Merriwa River to collect data on the quantity of traffic and type of vehicle (car, truck, etc) passing through Merriwa.

On 11 August 2022, the MDPA wrote (by email) to Michael Papadopoulos of Transport NSW, asking him to confirm Paul McLachlan's commitment to conduct an analysis of several options to divert heavy vehicles (at least) around Merriwa complete with a social and economic impact analysis of each option, that can be presented to the Merriwa community for consideration. As Paul had mentioned it would take twelve to eighteen months to complete, the MDPA were anticipating a result by around April 2023.

Mr Papadopoulos' emailed response on 15 September 2022 appears below.

#### 1. Merriwa Heavy Vehicle detour/bypass

A. As advised at our meeting the Golden Highway Strategy did not identify the requirement for a heavy vehicle detour of bypass of Merriwa. My recollection of the meeting was Paul McLachlan advising that the review of the Golden Highway Strategy was due in the next 12 months. Whilst I can confirm that a review does take 18 months to complete at this point in time the date for the commencement of a review of the strategy has not been determined. I am of the understanding at this point in time Upper Hunter Shire council has not progressed an investigation of a heavy vehicle bypass.

### 8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the MDPA believes now is the opportune time for Transport NSW to fulfil the promise made by the former Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, and to conduct a study into viable options to remove heavy vehicles from Bettington Street Merriwa, including an assessment of the various potential social and economic impacts.

The introduction of the CWO REZ and the general increase in heavy vehicle movements along the Golden Highway has elevated the importance of addressing this critical safety issue. There is general agreement across the wider community that heavy vehicles pose an undesirable risk to safety and should be redirected away from Bettington Street. We believe many truck drivers would welcome the opportunity to avoid having to pass through the Merriwa CBD.

In consideration of all of the above, the MDPA representing the Merriwa district community, once again appeals to Transport NSW to conduct a study to identify various options to remove heavy vehicles from Bettington Street Merriwa and to assess the likely social and economic impact of each of these options.

**Stephen Gowlund, President**  
**Merriwa District Progress Association**  
**May 2024**