**Council happenings . . .**  

with Mayor  

Harold Johnston

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**Torryburn Bridge – Temporary Arrangements**

As you are no doubt all well aware, the loss of the Torryburn Bridge in the Natural Disaster that occurred on 20/21 April 2015 has resulted in the isolation of a number of landholders and residents, with huge impacts directly on each family, property and farming enterprise.

The immediate essential services have been provided by the State Government’s Emergency Services with some temporary assistance to affected residents. Council is also aware that some very limited land access has been provided through the good will of a number of property owners of both Torryburn Road and Clements Road. Thank you for the assistance, generosity and forbearance of those landholders.

During the last week or so, Council has been working in close co-operation with landholders of the area, the Roads and Maritime Services and Emergency Service organisations to seek a short term solution to the problem of isolation for the affected families and farming enterprises to at least allow the return of some normalcy to their lives.

Investigations have included options for low level temporary structures on or near the current site as well as alternative access utilising existing road and bridge infrastructure on Clements Road. Negotiations are currently at an advanced stage with landholders, Roads and Maritime Services and other Government agencies to construct a new temporary access from Clements Road to Torryburn Road.

It is Council’s intention to immediately proceed with the construction of this new alternative access road. This road will be constructed to two-wheel drive, all-weather standard gravel road allowing for normal heavy vehicles to access Torryburn Road for primary producers and horse studs. It will be predominantly single lane, with passing bays provided at appropriate intervals, with speed limits and low level waterway crossings.

It is anticipated that these works can be constructed to a fully trafficable standard within a four/five week period, with Council working with landholders and the State Emergency Services to continue to provide land based access in the interim period, subject of course to the prevailing weather conditions.

In the long term, a new bridge will be constructed to replace the lost structure, fully funded through the Federal Governments Natural Disaster Relief Fund. The timing for the replacement structure is not known specifically at this time, however, it would be expected that the alternative route above will be required for a period of about 12 months, whilst geotechnical and hydraulic investigations are undertaken, design and contract documents are prepared, tenders let and construction undertaken of the new Torryburn Bridge.

Council will continue to keep all residents and landholders informed on progress with both the temporary and permanent solutions outlined above.

**Recovery Coordinator**

Council welcomes the appointment of Brigadier Darren Naumann as the Regional Coordinator. The damage from the storms was widespread and, unfortunately, our shire seems the hardest impacted. The Brigadier’s role, in broad terms, is to provide a direct link to Premier Baird and identify issues and problems that could hamper the quick recovery of our community.

**Blazeaid**

Council is financially supporting the basic costs of the volunteer-based organization, Blazeaid, which works with families and individuals after natural disasters. Blazeaid is establishing a basecamp at Dungog Showground to open this week.

Affected farmers requiring assistance with fencing or damage to structures can register by sending an email to blazeaid.dungog@gmail.com with details of damage and when volunteers are able to start or by phoning Jainee on 0401783034.

13 May 2015