

ORDINARY MEETING 7 OCTOBER 2014	5.6
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REPORT FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Linda Cardew – Chief Executive Officer #430059

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council receives and notes the report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report presents an outline of the operational initiatives and progress made by Council's administration during August and September 2014.

BACKGROUND:

At every second Council meeting an overview of Council's operations is provided by the Chief Executive Officer. The aim of these reports is to communicate how the administration is managing the diverse activities and challenges arising in the course of Council's business, and to summarise work in progress and the milestones achieved.

There is an open invitation to the community to provide feedback, at any time, on any aspect of Council's service delivery. The organisational goal of continual improvement will be always better informed if staff have a greater understanding of the community's observations, and so we welcome and encourage all comments.

REPORT:

CEO UNIT

Community Participation

The CEO Unit has been involved with a wide range of community events and activities.

In mid August various events were held throughout Seniors Week. Council had successfully secured a small grant and partnered with the Douglas Shire Community Services Association to deliver a morning tea activity on Monday 18 August and also provided assistance to the Douglas Shire Seniors Inc. for their annual senior's lunch.

Officers from the CEO Unit were instrumental in the organisation of the Daintree Community Forum that took place on 28 August 2014. The forum was an opportunity for communities north of the Daintree River to meet with senior management of Council and to express opinions and concerns regarding the region. Officers also assisted in the coordination and participation of the Crocodile Information session held on 20 August 2014.

September saw officers assist with the promotion and participation of the Partners in Recovery Forum held 11 September; and coordination of the Citizenship Ceremony on Citizenship Day with 20 residents taking the pledge. As part of Small Business Week, officers implemented a range of tools, information and funding/training/development opportunities on the website. This was promoted through the Douglas Chamber of Commerce.

Community partners

CEO Unit officers have formed a number of socially and economically beneficial partnerships and initiatives within Council, throughout the Shire and the region. These include but are not limited to:

- Supporting Traditional Owner groups with funding applications, business opportunities and management of culturally sensitive areas
- Negotiation and commencement of a work experience program for the long term unemployed
- Planning the 'Get Ready' Resilience Road Show in conjunction with QLD Fire and Emergency Services
- Initial development of Accessible Douglas Directory
- Attendance of regional economic development workshop that involved Tablelands Regional Council, Cassowary Coast Regional Council and Taste Paradise
- Working across Council to develop and implement signage initiatives for the Daintree Gateway
- Attendance at the liquor accord meetings, commencement of CPTED audits
- Attendance at CAN and Youth Network meeting
- The Green Buildings program has commenced within Council with a number of initiatives commencing that reduce energy consumption.

The Douglas Community Housing Group, which comprises local and outreach services, has been reinvigorated and will collate the JCU report completed in 2012 titled "*Homelessness in Douglas – It's Much More Than Not Having A Roof Over Your Head*" and all associated data to advocate to the Minister the needs of Douglas Shire.

Funding

Officers have identified a number of funding opportunities for community activities and promoted these opportunities to local not-for-profit and sporting organisations. Officers have assisted a number of organisations to develop funding applications and provided letters of support.

The CEO Unit is responsible for the Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF). The second round of the program was opened on the 1 October 2014 and will close on the 1 December 2014.

Web site and Facebook

The web site is continually being updated with new features and tools to ensure we are keeping our communities informed of the changes and opportunities for the Shire. Officers have added a Community Grant page to assist community groups to identify funding opportunities, opening and closing dates along with information about being 'Croc Wise' in the Shire and the Community Engagement Status Board.

Officers have promoted the online film and TV locations database integrated with Screen Queensland to our communities to ensure images that capture the region at its best are in the database. This very new and valuable website tool has already secured a new teen comedy television series to be filmed in Cape Tribulation.

Council's Facebook page is a very popular way of getting messages out to our communities. Council has posted 45 items over the last five weeks which reached 31,808 users, with each post reaching an average of 707 users.

CORPORATE SERVICES

Governance

In line with the Operational Plan, work is continuing on reviewing the suite of Council policies that have been transferred from Cairns Regional Council. The first stage of this has been the Policy mapping to allocate responsible officers to review policy content. The outcome of the reviews will either see the policy retained without amendment, enhancements made or where appropriate the policies revoked. This project will take several months to complete and relevant reports will be presented to Council prior to the end of the financial year.

In August we received advice from the Office of the Information Commissioner that it would be undertaking a desktop audit of Council's website to ensure that we were compliant with the requirements under the *Right to Information Act 2009* and *Information Privacy Act 2009*. The website has been updated to reflect the information required under the legislation and Council officers have conducted a self audit of the site. The desktop audits by the Office of the Information Commissioner will commence from 1 October 2014.

During the month of September there were two tenders advertised that have been co-ordinated by the Governance section. These tenders are the Hire of Mobile and Fixed Plant (Wet & Dry) and the Lease of the Port Douglas Caravan Park. Both tenders have created a lot of interest in the general public. A public forum was held for the Wet and Dry Hire tenders, which proved to be a very popular meeting with in excess of 20 contractors attending. In addition, over 70 tender documents have been issued for this process. The lease of the Port Douglas Caravan Park has created considerable interest as well, with approximately 17 documents issued.

The position of Caretaker at the Wonga Beach Caravan Park has also been advertised. After 17 years, Cecilia Pinkstone who has fulfilled the role of caretaker has tendered her resignation with an effective date of 31 October 2014. Cecilia, with her husband Trevor, commenced in 1997 and during these years significantly increased the patronage of the park with many visitors returning on an annual basis. Even at this early stage of advertising this vacancy has created a high level of enquiry.

Work has continued on the Annual Report with the structure and content starting to take shape. This work will continue so that once the Queensland Audit Office has signed off Council's 2013/14 financial statements the report can be finalised within the required timeframes.

The Audit Committee induction was held in late August and all members of the committee are now familiar with the purpose and process of the Committee. A special meeting was held on 19 September 2014, for the Audit Committee to satisfy legislative requirements of reviewing the draft 2013/14 financial statements prior to the Queensland Audit Office final audit.

Progress on the development of a streamlined Human Resource function has continued with relevant project plans being developed and a review of the current process and policies commenced. Work has also commenced on a corporate induction program and whilst this will be a comprehensive induction to Douglas we plan to keep it in line with the current theme of "Concise, Contemporary & Compliant".

Finance and Information Technology

Staff from the Queensland Audit Office (QAO) were in attendance last week undertaking the final audit of Council's 2013/14 financial statements. A special meeting of Council will be scheduled prior to the end of October to present the 2013/14 financial statements as there is a legislative requirement for the audit to be finalised by 31 October 2014, including the QAO sign off.

This has been an extraordinary year considering the work required to finalise de-amalgamation and at the same time conduct the business operations of Council. For the Finance Team to be able to deliver on all aspects and to competently complete the audit, within the legislated timeframes, demonstrates a tremendous level of commitment and dedication to the success of the new Douglas.

The first half yearly rate notices were issued on 28 July 2014 with a due date for payment being 28 August 2014. At the expiry of this period Council had received approximately 75% of value of rate notices issued. The Rates Section has since issued approximately 1,800 letters to ratepayers who have overlooked the due date for payment. This is the first phase of Council's debt recovery program to actively follow up on all outstanding debts.

The Information Technology (IT) Section has been progressing the Phase 2 implementation of the software modules. There has been a Civica consultant on-site undertaking workshops with relevant staff on the Organisation's Asset Management requirements. There will be a further two weeks of workshops in October/November, after which staff will meet to determine to what extent and how soon this project will proceed.

An upgrade for Council's Electronic Records management system has been scheduled for 24 October 2014. Work is also underway within different areas of Council to refine business processes to streamline workflows which will ultimately provide a higher level of customer service.

Library

During the months of August and September the Library has continued to build on programs and services offered to the people of Douglas.

"Get to grips with computer basics at Mossman Library" has resumed with the Library currently offering classes in Computer basics and Introduction to Email and Internet. Additional classes will be added when Wi-Fi becomes available.

Rob Hubbard, a local poet, launched his new poetry book *"Distinctively Daintree"* at Mossman Library and community members will be able to meet Rosalind Brenner, author of *"Kalisz: a journey of return"* when she visits in October.

The partnership with Birch Carroll & Coyle and Event Cinemas has been a successful one. *"The Boxtrolls"* was the latest colouring in competition and 10 people received family passes to the movies. *"Gone Girl"*, based on the book by Gillian Flynn is now open to adults borrowing from Mossman and Port Douglas Libraries.

The Library is currently building a partnership with ABC Open Learning. This will see Gemma Deavin visit in early November to conduct workshops on *"Getting to know your digital camera"* and writing. This increases the service level offered to the community and ensures that the Library continues to be used as a creative learning community space.

Douglas Libraries were asked to contribute to the *"Arts for all Queenslanders strategy"* blog (<http://www.arts.qld.gov.au/blog/index.php/holiday-reading/>) with regard to the *Tourist card* provided by State Library of Qld. The post provides a great example of how small, thoughtful ideas can offer great services and how cultural tourism can be strengthened by existing local facilities.

The library Team Leader attended an SLQ 2020 Forum hosted by the State Librarian, Janette Wright, in Cairns. The draft 2015-2020 plan is expected to be developed by December and released in July 2015.

For the month of August the Mossman and Port Douglas Libraries had 6909 visitors; 7393 loans; 624 reservations satisfied; 34 inter-library loans; 58 new members and 166 children enjoyed the regular Storytime and Baby rhyme time sessions held each Thursday morning at 10.30am.

School holiday activities are currently underway and the Library is a fun, safe, learning environment to visit.

Organisation Business Support Unit

Following de-amalgamation and due to existing contractual arrangements, the Douglas *After Hours Service* was diverted through Cairns Regional Council. Feedback received from customers identified that this process was causing some confusion. Negotiations were held with the existing After Hours Contract provider to implement Douglas's own After Hours arrangement. This was successfully implemented on Friday 5th September 2014.

One of the key focus areas of establishing the new Douglas was to be able to provide opportunities for local residents to gain employment. As the Organisation Business Support Unit (OBSU) provides a diverse range of administrative functions, it has been identified as a suitable area to facilitate Traineeships. The successful applicant commenced her traineeship with the OBSU on 1 September 2014.

OPERATIONS

Development and Environment Update Planning Scheme

Councillor workshops are continuing with recent topics including Bush Living and Film Production. Drafting of the new Planning Scheme is well underway and a first draft document should be available to Councillors within the next two months.

Planning

A list of planning applications and links to the common material for each application is on the Council website. The new format enables easy access for Councillors and the public.

Interviews were undertaken for a new planning and compliance officer who will commence with Council on 29 September 2014.

Planning Appeals

Preparation for the hearing of the Appeals with respect to 36 Murphy St and 27 Murphy St, Port Douglas is continuing in accordance with the requirements of the planning and environment court. The appeal lodged by the developer of the new Exemplar coach depot is also proceeding in accordance with court directions.

Regulatory Services

Local Laws/Environmental Health/Plumbing

The application to QCAT seeking leave to appeal from the earlier decision regarding the three dogs in the pound that are the subject of Dangerous Dog declarations has been refused. The Dangerous Dog declarations will remain in force.

Local laws officers have responded to a large number of issues including the following:

- Received through Customer Request Management:
 - nineteen dog barking complaints
 - seventeen illegal camping complaints
 - fifteen dog stray/roaming complaints
 - two dog attacks investigated and resolved.
- Investigated and resolved six miscellaneous local laws complaints including burning rubbish, quad bikes on beaches and illegal clearing.
- Thirteen dogs were impounded or surrendered to Council. Three dogs were registered and returned to owners, three were re-homed, one is still impounded and six were euthanized.
- Five cats were impounded as a result of being caught in Council supplied traps. Two cats were returned to their owners and the other three were de-sexed and re-homed.
- Assistance was provided by the police on approximately six separate occasions to assist in dealing with illegal campers and buskers without permits who refused to abide by Council officer directions.
- Twenty-nine Inspection/Investigation Notices relating to local laws complaints, particularly dogs, were issued.
- Five abandoned vehicles were towed away.
- Seven overgrown allotment notices were issued.
- Officers conducted an audit of abandoned vehicles that have been towed in the past few months and started the process to dispose of them.

Licence Renewals are underway for Food Premises with Accommodation and Swimming Pool renewals are to follow shortly.

The responsibility for solid waste will be transitioned from Water and Waste to Development and Environment over the next few weeks. Council's plumbing and trade waste inspector, and one permits and licensing officer will now report to the Manager Water and Waste with regards to trade waste matters. Plumbing matters will continue to report to the Manager of Development and Environment. The arrangements will be reviewed in around six months.

Water and Waste

Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (EHP) annual reporting

The Water and Waste team members have reached an important milestone by preparing the annual waste and landfill report as well as the annual wastewater report. The reports are at the final review stages and will be submitted in time to successfully fulfil yet another regulatory requirement. Previously this time consuming task was performed by a larger team in the CRC environmental group.

Capital works projects

The Daintree intake access track was successfully completed on 26 August 2014. The access to maintain the Daintree water intake has become a safety concern in recent years and this upgrade will ensure safe access even after severe weather events.

The construction of the new 3.5km water mains in Syndicate Road commenced on the 9 September 2014. All materials have been ordered and received and to date a total of 410 metres of 100mm class 16 pipe has been installed by the water reticulation team.

A Gas Chlorination Project Inaugural Steering Committee Meeting/Workshop took place on 9 September 2014. The engineering consultancy GHD was appointed to assist with the project

management and to mentor water and wastewater staff members in a complex project management environment. Principal decisions were made during the inaugural workshop and a design register was established, allocating tasks and target dates to members of the steering committee. Work is focussing on three installation localities: the Mossman water plant, Craiglie reservoir and the Mossman wastewater plant.

Waste and landfill

A Technical Officer Waste was appointed and started with duties on 15 September 2014. This appointment will significantly strengthen the Waste and Landfill section, which, as mentioned above, will transfer to Development and Environment after the new Technical Officer completes orientation. During September Trade Waste transferred to Water and Waste to initiate control and monitoring of commercial and industrial liquid trade waste producers.

Compliance

Drinking water is sampled at intakes, reservoirs, treatment plants and in the reticulation network to ensure compliance with the Australian Drinking Water Guideline (ADWG). For the period 19 August to 26 September, a total of 168 water samples were taken in the four water supply schemes and tested by a NATA accredited laboratory for physical, chemical and microbiological parameters. All tested parameters in water samples taken were compliant with ADW Guidelines during this period.

Proficiency testing started in August in the Douglas Shire laboratory and 60 samples were analysed and compared with results obtained from the NATA laboratory. Proficiency testing will be completed in October.

Wastewater compliance samples are taken from the treatment processes, bio-solids, final effluent and receiving waters. All parameters tested were compliant with licence conditions.

The landfill at Killaloe and the transfer stations are sampled and monitored according to EHP licence conditions and the Killaloe Transitional Environmental Program (TEP). All parameters tested were compliant during August and September.

Infrastructure

Civil Works

The road asphalt program was completed in early September. This includes Junction Road, sections of Snapper Island Drive and Shannonvale Road. Bitumen reseals were also completed for sections of Syndicate Road, Finlayvale Road, Whitely Road and South Arm Drive. Line markers are in the area marking new sealed works and urgent safety hold lines.

Santacatterina Road Floodway is fifty percent complete. The crew will work on Miallo State School wheel chair access next week, then return to complete the Santacatterina Road Floodway. The program aims to complete the school works during the September school holidays.

Works started on the Miallo State School Bus Shelter (capital works) in conjunction with funds from Department of Education to upgrade an all access wheel chair friendly pathway from the School car park into the school grounds. This includes the relocation/repositioning of the existing bus shelter in the car park area.

Contractors have commenced the earthworks for the Connelly Road concrete causeway. This will be funded by the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) for reconstruction (like-for-like), Flood Resilience 40 percent and Council 60 percent.

Maintenance Works

The road maintenance grading program is now north of the Daintree River Forest Creek area and heading towards Cape Tribulation. The Daintree gravel roads are not included in this maintenance program as these are included in the NDRRA submission. The street sweeping program is currently in the Mossman area and heading north.

The grass slashing program is winding down due to slow grass growth rate at this time of the year from reduced rainfall and warming weather conditions. These officers will be engaged on other Council work activities.

The bitumen road patching program is on normal operation. They have completed Port Douglas and south of Port Douglas and have now moved to Cape Tribulation area to deal with the extreme potholing.

Construction of the Woobadda Bridge continues to progress with the two bridge bands (arches) in place and structural tie-in activities including the access approaches. Douglas and Cook Council representatives met onsite during September for a site inspection with Douglas Shire Council Superintendent. This project is scheduled to be completed late 2014 (prior to the next wet season).

At the time of writing this report, the Bloomfield Bridge official opening is scheduled for 3 October 2014. Council will take ownership of the bridge after the expiry of the defects liability period.

National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) program

Submission claims for emergent works and the restoration of essential public assets (REPA) works totalling \$14,546,180 have been lodged over past weeks with the Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA). In the last fortnight officers have been advised by QRA that \$10,842,950 has been approved by QRA to date. Some of the submissions lodged remain to be assessed by QRA and further minor claims are to still to be compiled and submitted by Council.

Council can now make a start on many of the works that have been delayed while waiting for these approvals. Until recently the northern areas of the Shire (e.g. Creb Track, Zig Zag, China Camp (Buru) were inaccessible. The engineering consultancy AECOM has been appointed to undertake the damage assessment and a further claim for the restoration of roads and infrastructure in that area was lodged with QRA this week (included in the above). It is expected that claims totalling approximately \$15 million from declared disaster events in 2014 will finally be lodged.

A tender for engineering consultancy services for the remainder of the works was conducted over the past six weeks, followed by a technical risk workshop on contract form was conducted by Council's solicitors and LGIS. A tender evaluation report will be presented to Council at the Closed Session at its Ordinary Meeting on 7 October 2014.

Local Government Infrastructure Services (LGIS) continues to provide oversight and assistance with procurement and management of consultancy services for the NDRRA works. A finance officer has been appointed to Council specifically for NDRRA finance management and reporting. The advertising period for an NDRRA project engineer (in the role of Council's Project Manager) has concluded with interviews and an appointment anticipated in the next few weeks. With the finalisation of the wet and dry hire tender, eligible, qualified local contractors will be invited to participate in the construction works.

A detailed report on all NDRRA activities will be presented to Council at an Ordinary Meeting in November.

Engineering

The Queensland Government is committed to supporting our regional communities and through the Royalties for the Regions program and will invest \$495 million over four years. The program aims to provide an economic future for Queensland's regions, beyond mining and resources, by investing in targeted infrastructure projects. Round Four of this Program is in process now. Council has submitted an application for the Port Douglas Reservoir. This is for funding contribution for the construction of the proposed drinking water supply 20ML reservoir.

Operational works actions completed include: Cooya Beach Ocean Breeze Stage 3A1 has been accepted for On Maintenance; Cooya Beach Ocean Breeze Stage 5B Decision Notice for Operation Works Completed; Port Pacific Stage 3 and 4 Request for Confirmation of Legal Point of Discharge and Flood Model Updated sent to Cardno; and the Central Hotel Bottle Shop Warner Street External Works Configuration Approved with construction commenced.

Project and design works have commenced on recent successful grant projects relating to the Connolly, Mowbray River Road and Whyanbeel causeways and the Daintree Gateway. These are ongoing until constructed.

Public and Natural Areas

Council has received quotes for the landscaping of the Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR) roundabout / intersection of Captain Cook Highway and Port Douglas Road. Council met with DTMR to review the received designs to ensure compliance. Council also met with the landscapers to seek reviewed designs (scopes) and more accurate quotes. DTMR funding will be provided upon completion of the landscaping works. This project is to be completed by 30 June 2015.

Beach sand nourishment is completed at Newell Beach for the moment as the stockpiled dredge sand from the Daintree River has been exhausted. All fallen trees have now been removed from Newell Beach.

Two Corrective Service workers have joined Council's public spaces teams for a limited program of works. One of Council's Corrective Service workers completed his program in Mossman and has recently started another. Port Douglas still has one Corrective Service labourer completing his program.

Council's pest management team has been busy surveying the hills of Whyanbeel for *Miconia* covering many kilometres. Three species of *Miconia* are known to occur in Queensland. All three species pose a significant threat to our rainforests and are targeted for eradication. Other common names for *Miconia* include velvet tree, bush currant and/or purple plague.

In addition, a helicopter survey for *Hiptage* has been completed with follow-up required to treat pest plants that were identified. *Hiptage* is a vine-like shrub native to parts of Asia. Originally planted as a garden ornamental, *Hiptage* has since established wild populations at several locations in coastal Queensland. Pest risk assessment presents evidence that *Hiptage* has the potential to become a significant pest.

Daintree Gateway Stage One is progressing with areas marked out and prepared for native-themed garden beds. Exotic pest tree species (non-native trees) were removed as part of the project. The planning is underway for the installation of a modern user-friendly and accessible public toilet block.

Quotations are in process of being sought for the construction of a new playground in Cape Tribulation.

Facilities Maintenance

The installation of ultra violet light emitters to the Mossman library, the Mossman Council administration building and the Port Douglas community hall was successfully completed.

Installation of the new solar panels on the Council administration building roof has been completed. The expected payback period for the solar panels from grid power savings is three years.

Within the first 16 days of operation the solar panels generated 1445KWH which is the equivalent carbon offset of 26 trees. Plans are now underway to install an energy efficient water pump at the swimming pool at the Mossman Riverside Leisure Park.

With the changeover of the TV network broadcasting signal, Council plans are underway to upgrade the Mossman black spot tower ready for the change over at the end of the year. Repairs have also been completed on the Cow Bay Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) transmitter which failed in the last weeks and was sent away for repair.

This year's facilities maintenance capital works program is under way with works planned to start in early November and most projects to be completed by the end of the year.

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE:

Council's operations are conducted as required by the Local Government Act 2009, and in accordance with all applicable policies and the Douglas Shire Council Operational Plan 2014 - 2015 adopted 27 June 2014.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

Council's operations are conducted in accordance with the 2014-2015 Budget adopted 27 June 2014.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS:

The new Council's operations have been subjected to an early risk assessment process, which will shortly be followed by the finalisation of the Risk Policy and a comprehensive Enterprise Risk Management Plan.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:

SOCIAL: The diverse communities of Douglas are Council's clients. Council's operations, services and programs are designed and delivered to support the people of Douglas.

ECONOMIC: The twin pillars of financial and economic sustainability underpin all Council's operations.

ENVIRONMENTAL: Environmental management is a priority consideration in the delivery of all Council operations and services.

INTERNAL/EXTERNAL CONSULTATION:

Council's General Managers and Branch Managers have been consulted and have contributed to the preparation of this report.

ATTACHMENTS:

Nil attached.