

7.15. DAINTREE RIVER FERRY UPDATE NOVEMBER TO DECEMBER 2025

REPORT AUTHOR Acting Manager Infrastructure Planning and Delivery

MANAGER Acting Manager Infrastructure Planning and Delivery

DEPARTMENT Infrastructure Planning and Delivery

DATE 24 February 2026

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the Daintree Ferry financial information and project progress for November to December 2025.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A monthly progress report is supplied to provide Councillors with financial details and project progress of the Daintree River Ferry.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL CONSIDERATIONS / RESOLUTIONS

At the Ordinary Meeting dated 8 October 2024, it was resolved that the Daintree Ferry would be replaced, ownership and operation would be outsourced, and a tender would be released to market for a contractor to design, construct, deliver and operate the ferry service.

At the Ordinary Meeting dated 10 December 2024, it was resolved that Councillors would be provided with monthly financial details relating to the Daintree River Ferry and progress on the Expressions of Interest (request for tender) to supply and operate the ferry.

REPORT/BACKGROUND

Financial Information

The graphs attached represent the financial performance and operational statistics of the Daintree River Ferry Operations for the current financial year. It should be noted that this is not a comprehensive assessment of the financial performance as Council's corporate and administrative costs that support the ferry operation have not been included. These costs include but are not limited to: ticket and ferry card sales administration, contract invoicing, accounts payable and receivable, budgeting and financial reporting, payroll and human resources, auditing, enquiry and complaints management and administrative costs and overheads.

Project Progress

1. Landside Infrastructure

The 100% stage civil design drawings have been issued to Council for review. Internal stakeholders across Council are currently reviewing the drawings. Underground cable locations, including water, power and communications were completed as a key input to the design drawings. The electrical drawings have been reviewed and approved. All drawing activities are on track with program.

2. New Ferry

Australian maritime engineering company Birdon have commenced design discussions with a Naval Architect. In addition, Birdon have started communicating with the existing ferry staff and are working with Council officers on communication and ticketing strategies. Council held the first community information session in late November at the Cow Bay Cricket Clubrooms.

FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Reporting on the Daintree River Ferry does not have any material resource impact on the delivery of the service.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Monthly reporting keeps Council informed of the progress in relation to the Daintree River Ferry operation and allows for timely corrective action if required.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

NIL

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

NIL

CORPORATE AND OPERATIONAL PLAN

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

Corporate Plan 2025-2030 Initiatives:

Theme 1 - Liveability

To deliver community activities to promote safe, healthy, inclusive and socially engaged communities with an environmental conscious.

1.5 - Keep the community informed.

Theme 2 - Prosperity

Council plans, builds and maintains the infrastructure required to improve our lifestyle and promote economic growth, working actively to support local businesses.

2.1 - Deliver a new Daintree ferry.

Theme 3 - Service Delivery

We deliver Council services effectively and efficiently to meet community expectations, focusing on the wellbeing of both the community and our employees.

3.6 - Deliver Council services to meet community expectations.

Operational Plan 2025-2026 Actions:

2.1.1 - Engage a contractor to own and operate a new Daintree River ferry.

2.1.2 - Upgrade landside infrastructure to meet the requirements of the new ferry and reduce waiting times.

LEGISLATION AND POLICY

Not applicable

CONSULTATION

Birdon
TNQ Transport Services (Entrada)
Council Operations and Maintenance Team

CONCLUSION

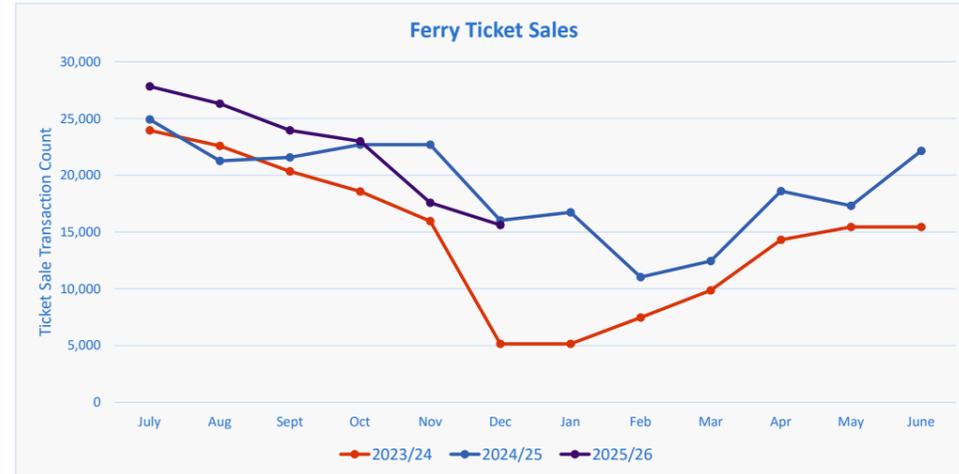
That Council receives and notes the Daintree River Ferry financial information and project progress for November to December 2025.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Daintree Ferry Monthly Report - Operations Statistics Nov Dec 2025 [7.15.1 - 2 pages]

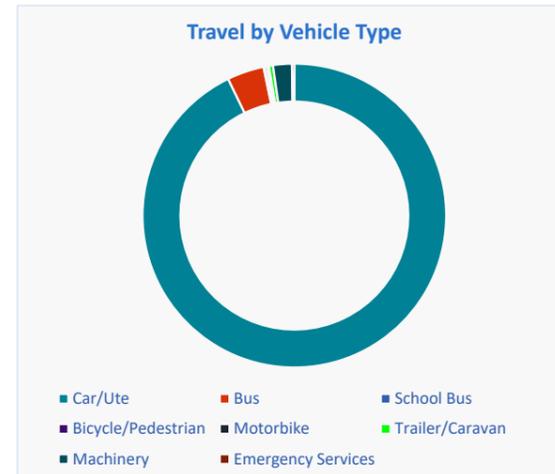
**Daintree Ferry Monthly Report
November to December 2025**

OPERATING STATISTICS



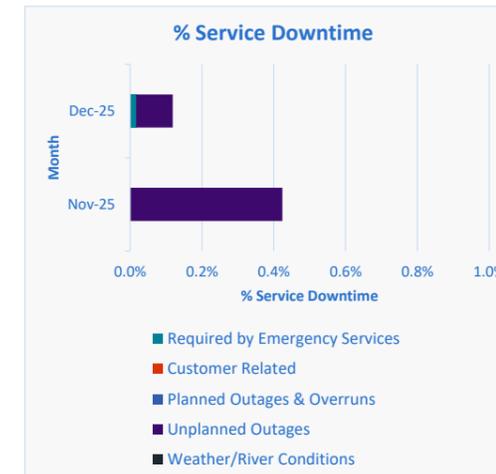
The line chart shows the number of ferry ticket sales purchased in a given month compared over the last three (3) financial years. It includes actual travel and pre-purchase tickets for future months. As expected, there are less ticket sales during the wet season, particularly between December and March. Ticket sale numbers were notably significantly lower in December 2023 to February 2024, following Tropical Cyclone Jasper. Ticket sale numbers in November and December 2025 were 25.4% and 2.5% lower respectively, compared with the previous year.

	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
2023/24	23,949	22,586	20,341	18,566	15,959	5,146	5,146	7,465	9,862	14,312	15,440	15,440
2024/25	24,915	21,267	21,572	22,698	22,698	16,021	16,737	11,030	12,436	18,602	17,307	22,148
2025/26	27,824	26,298	23,957	22,987	17,584	15,619						



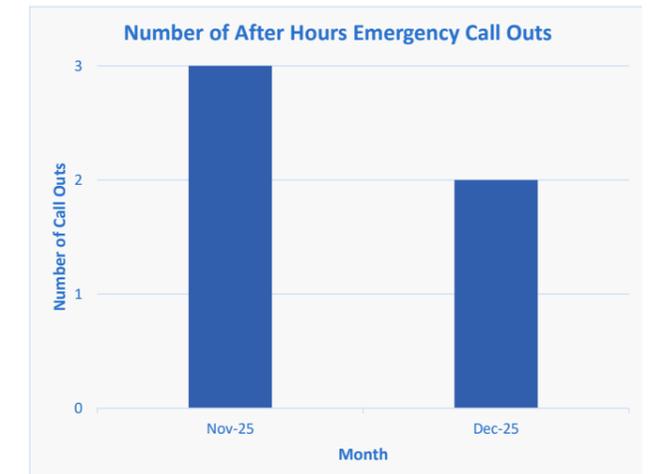
The pie chart shows the breakdown of vehicle types which used the Daintree Ferry in December 2025. Car and ute travel makes up the majority of travel (92.8%), followed by buses (3.9%) and machinery (2.0%).

Travel by Vehicle Type	Dec-25
Car/Ute	92.8%
Bus	3.9%
School Bus	0.1%
Bicycle/Pedestrian	0.3%
Motorbike	0.2%
Trailer/Caravan	0.4%
Machinery	2.0%
Emergency Services	0.3%
Total	100.0%



The Daintree Ferry's operational hours are 19 hours per day, 365 days a year. On occasion there are instances where the ferry service experiences a downtime. In November 2025, the ferry was out of service three (3) times for a total of 145 minutes. In December 2025, the ferry was out of service for two (2) times for a total of 42 minutes. This was due to unplanned outages relating to adjusting and changing out components; and one (1) code one ambulance.

% Service Downtime	Nov-25	Dec-25
Required by Emergency Services	0.00%	0.02%
Customer Related	0.00%	0.00%
Planned Outages & Overruns	0.00%	0.00%
Unplanned Outages	0.42%	0.10%
Weather/River Conditions	0.00%	0.00%

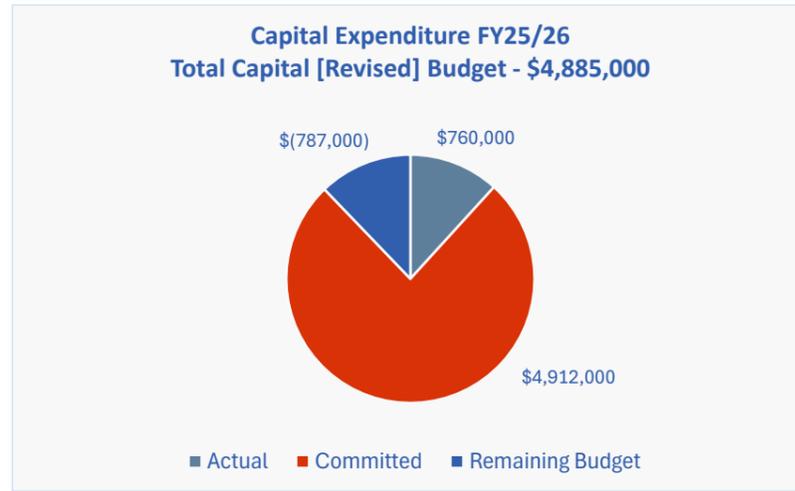


In addition to operating 19 hours per day, the Daintree Ferry operates an on-call service for emergency services between midnight and 5am. In November 2025, there were three (3) emergency services requiring passage out-of-hours; in December 2025, there were two (2).

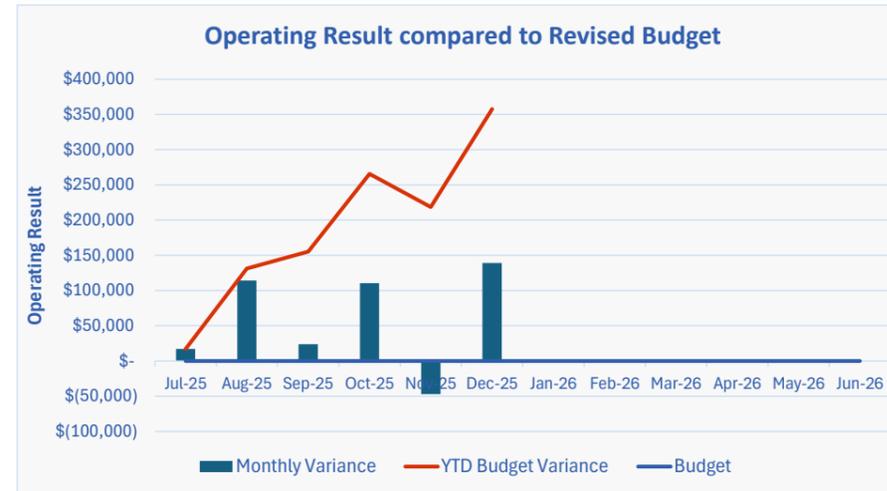
Number of After Hours Emergency Call Outs	Nov-25	Dec-25
After Hours Emergency Call Outs	3	2

**Daintree Ferry Monthly Report
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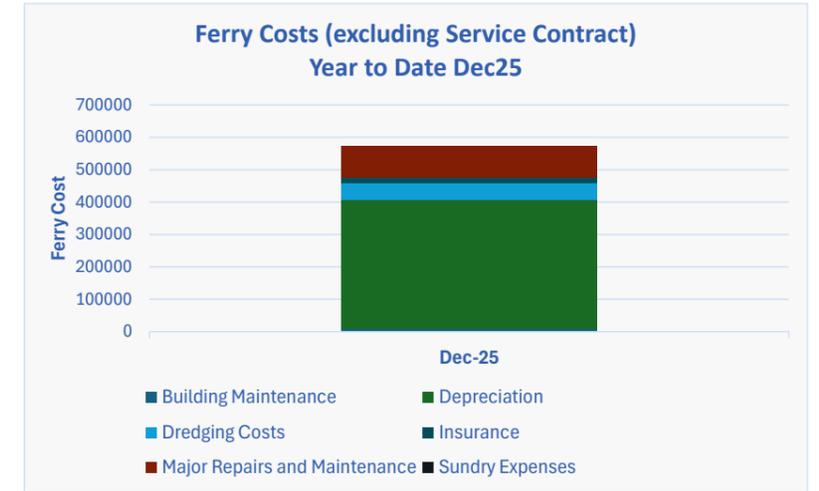
OPERATING STATISTICS - PART B



The pie chart shows the capital commitment, actual spend and remaining budget for financial year 2025/26. The revised budget for the year was \$4.885 million, which was increased from the initial budget of \$2.705 million after Council secured additional funding for the new landside infrastructure. At December 2025, the total of actuals plus commitments for the year was \$5.672 million. It is showing we are over committed due to three (3) approved variations to the landside infrastructure contract for flood modelling, intersection redesigns and upgraded drainage.



The chart shows an operating surplus for July to December 2025 compared to the budget. Spending has been less than budgeted, particularly relating to dredging. It is likely that this is a timing variance and that actual expenditure will balance out by the end of the financial year.



The stacked bar chart shows the operational spend by type, excluding the service contract. In December 2025, depreciation made up the largest proportion, followed by major repairs/maintenance and dredging expenditure.