

## 5.1. COCONUT ACTION PLAN 2017-2018

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### RECOMMENDATION

**That Council resolves to adopt the Coconut Action Plan 2017/2018.**

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council adopted the Coconut Management Plan (Plan) in 2015. In adopting the Plan, Council resolved that an annual action plan will be developed to detail the individual actions to be taken over each successive 12-month period. The Coconut Action Plan 2017/2018 provides open and transparent information to all stakeholders regarding operational actions and maintenance over the 2017/2018 financial year. The action plan details the projects to be completed, and documents the actions to be taken to progress the outcomes outlined in the Coconut Management Plan 2015.

### BACKGROUND

On 18 August 2015 Council adopted the Coconut Management Plan and Coconut Action Plan 2015/2016. The Plan provides Council officers with the necessary tools to classify coconut palms against a risk based approach, including criteria specific to their location, the risk they pose and their overall condition. The assessment tool is necessary for ensuring effective and efficient operational and maintenance based activities.

The document includes provisions for stakeholders to appeal against the removal of coconut palms and to enter into maintenance agreements with Council to take over the maintenance (de-nutting) of certain palms. To date, Council has entered into eleven (11) separate agreements with landholders for numerous coconut palms located throughout the shire.

The plan provides all stakeholders; including Councillors, Council staff and the general public with a clear policy and understanding of the processes to be followed in order to make informed decisions regarding coconut management.

### COMMENT

The actions proposed in the Coconut Action Plan 2017-2018 are summarised into four categories:

1. **Coconut de-nutting program** – A total of 1,405 coconut palms have been identified for maintenance with no additional palms added and 52 palms removed from the de-nutting program over 2016/2017;
2. **Removal of high risk specimens for public safety** - Table 1 below details the coconuts scheduled to be removed for public safety and environmental outcomes over the 2017/2018 financial year.

Table 1- Coconut Palms to be Removed

Area	Location	Reason	Number of Palms
Port Douglas	Wharf Street (Coast Guard)	High risk to public safety	7
	Pecten Avenue	High risk to public safety	4
	Coral Drive	High risk to public safety	1
Wonga	The Esplanade (Caravan Park)	Defective / unsafe	17
Newell Beach	Marine Parade (Esplanade)	Defective / unsafe	1
Mossman	Park Street (Caravan Park)	High risk to public safety	4
Cooya Beach	Jacaranda Street	High risk to public safety	1
<b>Total</b>			<b>35</b>

3. **Environmental control and restoration projects** – Two restoration projects are to be completed in 2017/2018:
  - i. Oak Beach Foreshore Restoration Project; and
  - ii. Germination control in the Daintree Lowlands.
4. **Landholder maintenance agreements** - provisions for stakeholders to appeal against the removal of coconut palms and to enter into maintenance agreements to take over the maintenance (de-nutting) of certain palms. Council has identified the southern Oak Beach precinct as a priority area.

## PROPOSAL

It is recommended that Council adopt the Coconut Action Plan 2017-2018. Adopting the plan will help ensure that there is a clear direction for the management and maintenance of coconuts (*Cocos nucifera*) on Council controlled lands. Such management will lower the risk of injury from falling nuts and ensure that important natural areas are protected from coconut palms.

## FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The operational costs of de-nutting and removal has been allocated in the 2017/2018 Council operational budget. Over the past 12 months, Council has benefitted from a reduction in the contract rate for de-nutting due to Council undertaking a public tender process and entering into a new service contract.

It is not envisaged that additional staff or resources will be required in the implementation of the Coconut Action Plan 2017-2018. All inspections and assessments will remain the responsibility of the Open Spaces Team Leaders.

## RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

By utilising the tools now approved in the Coconut Management Plan 2015, Council Officers are able to undertake condition and risk assessments which will help to reduce Council's exposure to hazards posed by coconut palms. This documentation is vital in ensuring Council's compliance and fulfilling our responsibilities to public health and safety, meeting auditing requirements and ultimately reducing Council's exposure to public liability claims.

Council must be able to demonstrate that we have inspection processes and procedures in place to reduce hazards across the Shire. The Coconut Action Plan 2017-2018 details the actions required to implement the appropriate remedial works to fulfil Council's responsibilities.

## SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

### Economic:

The total current cost of coconut management is \$190,000. The breakdown of expenditure consists of \$130,000 for denutting and an additional \$60,000 to remove coconut debris such as fallen trees, leaves, fruit and nuts from lawns, paths, roads, beaches and storm water drains.

Since implementing the Coconut Management Plan 2015 substantial savings have been made. The savings were achieved from a reduction in the contract rate for de-nutting services due to competitive market price between suppliers. The cost of effective coconut management is expected to rise into the future if the Coconut Action Plan 2017/2018 is not adopted.

### Environmental:

The adopted Coconut Management Plan 2015 highlighted the impacts Coconut Palms are having on Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC) listed littoral rainforest. The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and Terrain Natural Resources and Mines (NRM) 2014 *Mapping Littoral Rainforest & Coastal Vine Thickets of Eastern Australia in the Wet Tropics: Mission Beach Pilot Study* identified coconut trees (*Cocos nucifera*) as transformer weeds in littoral rainforest in the pilot area, and recommended that transformer species in littoral rainforests in the Wet Tropics be given appropriate weight by government in considering funding applications for control.

The Douglas region contains many examples of Littoral Rainforest, an EPBC listed coastal vegetation community shared along the eastern Australian coast but with specific character and significance in the Wet Tropics and Douglas area. It provides much of the essential 'where the rainforest meets the reef' character for which the region is famous.

The failure of the management of coconut palms in these ecosystems is advocating the demise of a critically endangered ecosystem.

### Social:

Our improved systems now allow Council to track progress, have measurable outcomes on clear and specific goals. The risk and condition assessment tools for making decisions will provide Council staff the ability to deliver services efficiently, provide accountability and engage with the community.

## CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

### Corporate Plan 2014-2019 Initiatives:

#### Theme 3 - Improve Environmental Performance

3.1.3 - *Develop management plans for Council's parks and reserves including coastal reserves and foreshore areas.*

### Operational Plan 2015-2016 Actions:

3.1.3 - Review of the 2017/18 Coconut Management Action Plan.

## COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

<b>Asset-Owner</b>	Meeting the responsibilities associated with owning or being the custodian of assets such as infrastructure.
<b>Fully-Responsible</b>	Funding the full cost of a program or activity

## CONSULTATION

**Internal:** Consultation was undertaken with internal Council Officers who reviewed customer requests and used their knowledge to determine the priorities. A workshop with Councillors was conducted on 5 September 2017 to discuss the draft plan.

**External:** The Coconut Action Plan 2017-2018 will be made available on Council's webpage (when approved) to provide information and awareness to the community.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A community consultation process has recently been undertaken with the key stakeholders to obtain a clear understanding of the opinions of the landholders / land managers affected by the coconuts proposed for removal. Written correspondence and onsite meetings have occurred with adjacent landowners asking whether they agree or disagree with the proposal to remove and replace the coconuts in the streetscape. The landowners were also asked whether they would enter into an agreement with Council to take over the maintenance, should they appeal the decision to remove the coconuts.

As a result of the consultation process and the residents' decline of offer for a management agreement, Council's intention is to proceed with the removal of thirty-five (35) of the coconut palms as outlined in the Coconut Action Plan 2017-2018.

## ATTACHMENTS

1. PUBLISH VERSION Coconut Action Plan 2017-18 **[5.1.1]**



# COCONUT MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

*2017-2018*

25 August 2017

**DOUGLAS** **SHIRE**  
COUNCIL

Engaging, Planning, Partnering  
Muruku Kirraji – Eastern Kuku Yalanji  
*Nganyji pina ngunda-lum ... Ma:Inyirri-yngku – Yirrgandyji*

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# Coconut Management Action Plan 2017 – 2018

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## PURPOSE

The coconut management action plan provides open and transparent information to all stakeholders regarding operational actions for the maintenance over the 2017/2018 financial year. The action plan sets out the projects to be completed which will help to achieve the coconut management plan outcomes as outlined in the Coconut Management Plan.

## ACTIONS

Coconut maintenance will be split into four categories as outlined below:

1. Coconut de-nutting program;
2. Removal of high risk specimens for public safety;
3. Environmental control and restoration projects; and
4. Landholder maintenance agreements.

## COCONUT DE-NUTTING PROGRAM

High risk coconut palms to be de-nutted throughout the Douglas Shire region are listed in Table 1 below. A total of 1,405 coconut palms have been identified for maintenance at present. De-nutting occurs twice annually and the estimated cost of de-nutting is \$130,000 in 2017/2018. The photo below shows one of the methods for de-nutting; climbing the tree and pruning by hand. The second method employed by Council is to erect an elevated platform. Council's preference is to use elevated platforms as climbing the trees causes scarring to the surface due to the spiked shoes worn by the climber. Figure 1 below shows the relevant maps of coconut location to be de-nutted.



**Table 1 - Coconut De-nutting Program**

Area	Address	Location	No. of trees
<b>Port Douglas</b>			
1	Capt Cook Highway	Near Paws & Claws	3
2	Nautilus St	Centre Island between Mitre and Reef Sts	33
3	Cowrie/Helmet Sts	Foreshore area between Cowrie & Helmet Sts	76
4	Barrier St	Cnr with Tropic Court.	1
5	Barrier St	Four Mile Park including Outrigger access northern side	20
6	Pecton Ave	Footpath	4
7	Triton Cres	Footpath	1
8	Little Reef St	East side	11
9	Port Douglas Road	Outside Medical Centre on cnr with Barrier St	3
10	Solander Blvd	Bruno Reidwig Park	54
11	Davidson St Service Road	Port to Mahogany includes 2 south of Fire Station	15
12	Ti Tree St	Cnr with Mahogany and in Ti tree St	5
13	Grant St	Rotary Park	2
14	Warner St	Between Grant & Wharf Sts	1
15	Wharf St	Over path Adjacent to Coast Guard Only	1
16	Wharf St	Rex Smeal Park includes Little Cove	37
17	Wharf St	Market Park	85
18	Wharf St	Market Park Carpark	5
19	Dixie St	Park next to Sugar Wharf	33
20	Ashford Ave	Park next to Boatramp	3
21	Ashford Ave	Boatramp next to Combines Club	5
22	Macrossan St	Jalun Park	34
23	Macrossan St	Davidson St to Jalun Park	18
24	Port Douglas Esplanade	Macrossan to Mowbray Sts including near Toilets	79
25	Garrick St	Macrossan to Sand St	27
26	Garrick St	Jalunbu Park	6
27	Garrick St	Southern end beach access	5
28	Sand St	Tide to Beryl Sts	9
29	Sand St	Southern Beach access	1
30	Davidson St	Reynolds Park near CWA Hall	6
31	Beryl St	Central Plaza	9
32	Davidson St	Mowbray to Macrossan Sts	9
33	Port Douglas Road	In front of QT	24
<b>Oak Beach</b>			
34	Oak Beach Rd	Northern Car park beach access	10
35	Oak Beach Rd	Pathway between Nos. 15 & 17	13



<b>Mossman</b>	Park St	Road verge of caravan park	5
<b>Cooya Beach</b>			
	Bouganvillea St	Foreshore area / Esplanade	305
Area	Address	Location	No. of trees
	Albatross Cl	On corner in front of flats	3
<b>Newell Beach</b>			
	Esplanade	Mown area of foreshore	144
	Rankin St	Boat ramp car park	9
	Marine Pde	Outside number 9 Executive Retreat	1
<b>Rocky Point</b>			
	Daintree Rd	Park opposite Rocky Point School Road	8
	Daintree Rd	Boat ramp car park	1
<b>Wonga Beach</b>			
	New Wonga Esplanade	Foreshore area	170
	Old Wonga Esplanade	Foreshore area	87
	Oleander Drv	Opposite Yarun Cl	2
	Oleander Drv	Corner of Oleander Drv and Marlin Drv	2
<b>Daintree Ferry</b>			
	Southern ramp	Both sides of ramp	9
	Northern ramp	Near boat loading bay	3
<b>Cape Tribulation</b>			
	Cape Tribulation Rd	Beach access old Coconut Beach Resort	2
	Cape Tribulation Rd	Southern Bank of Thompson Creek causeway	3
	Cape Tribulation Rd	In front of Whet Restaurant	3
<b>Total</b>			<b>1405</b>

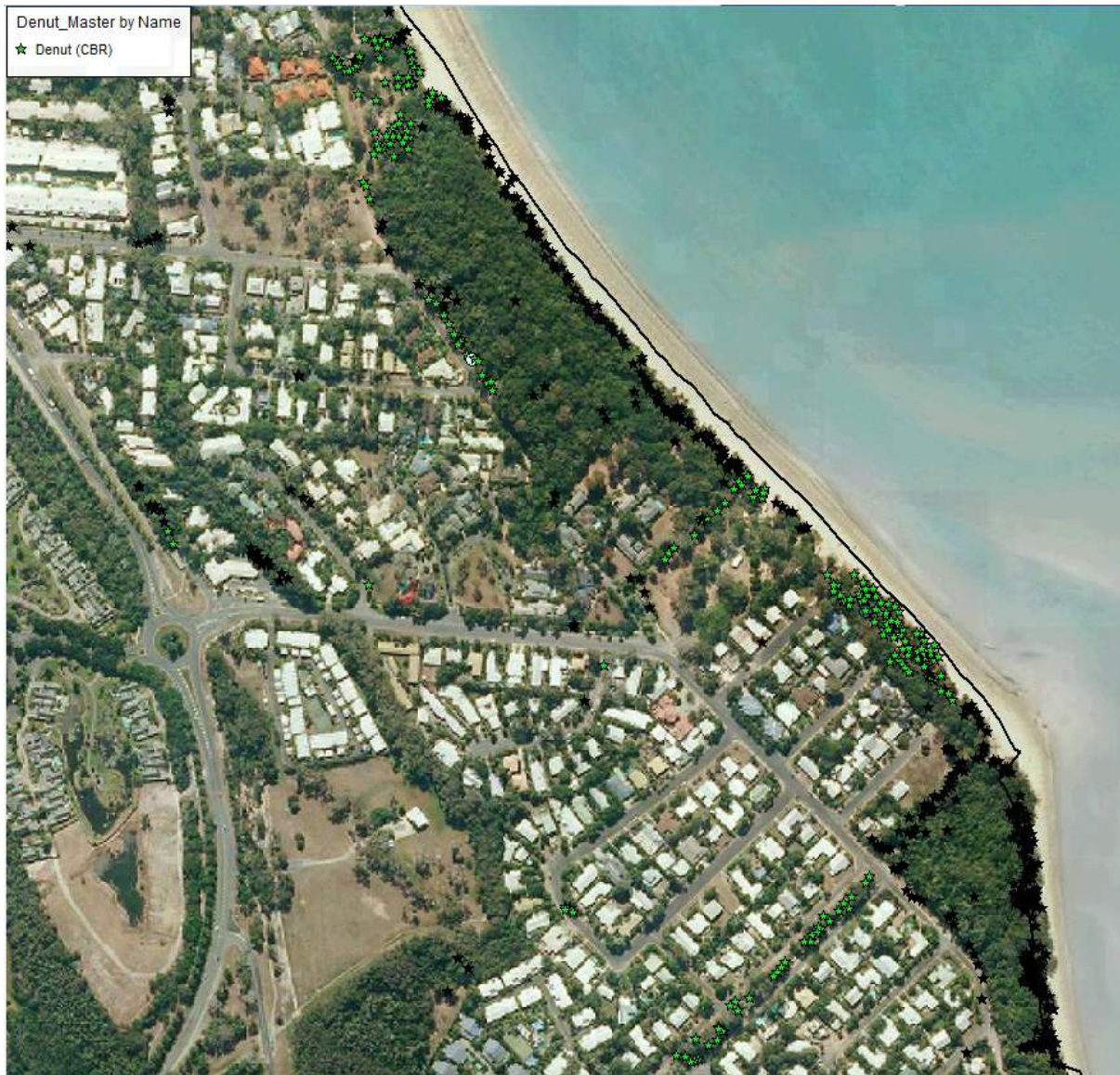
**FIGURE 1 – Area map locations of Coconuts to be de-nutted**

**Map 1 – Port Douglas CBD**





## Map 2 - Four Mile Area

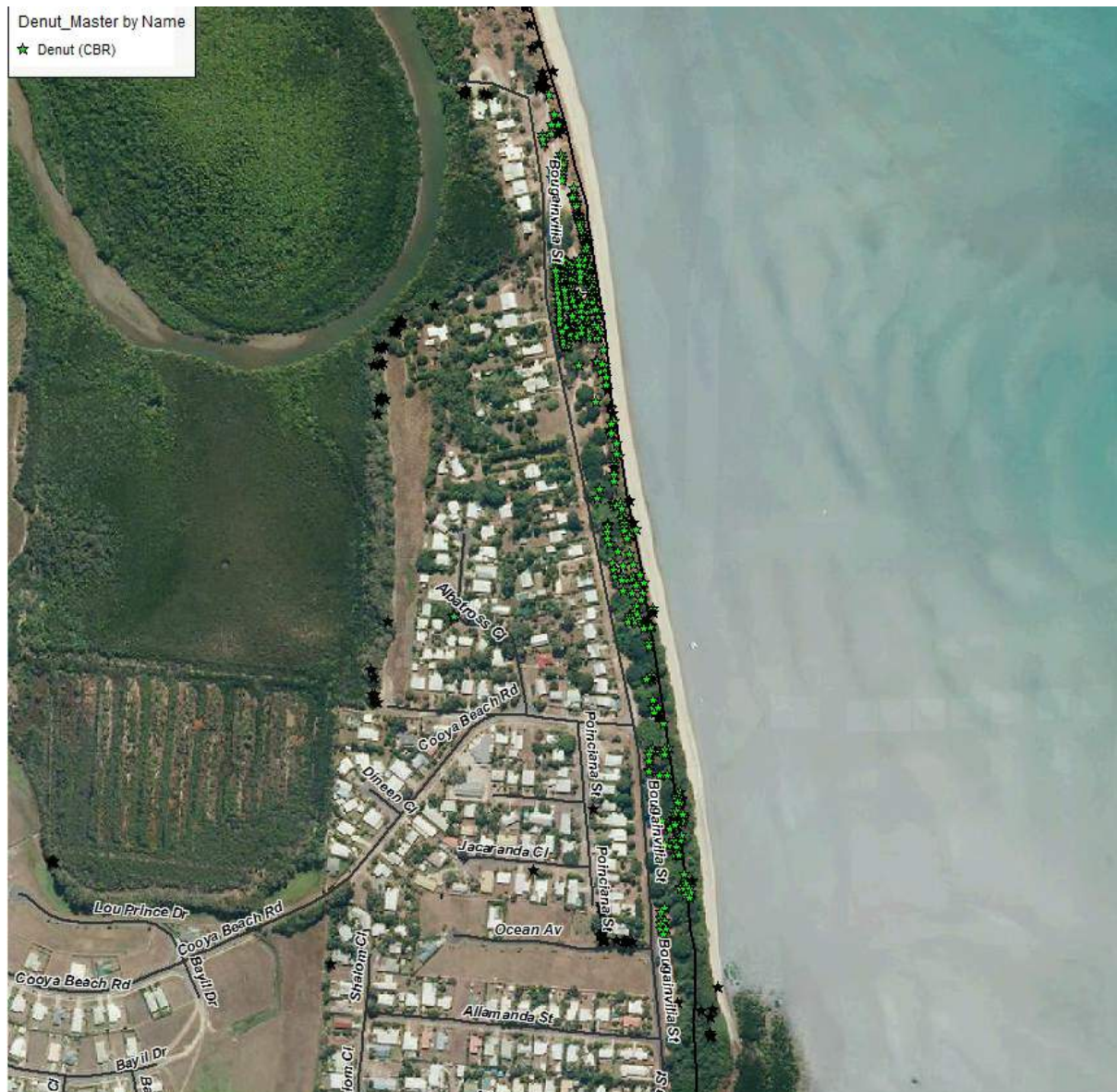


### Map 3 - Oak Beach



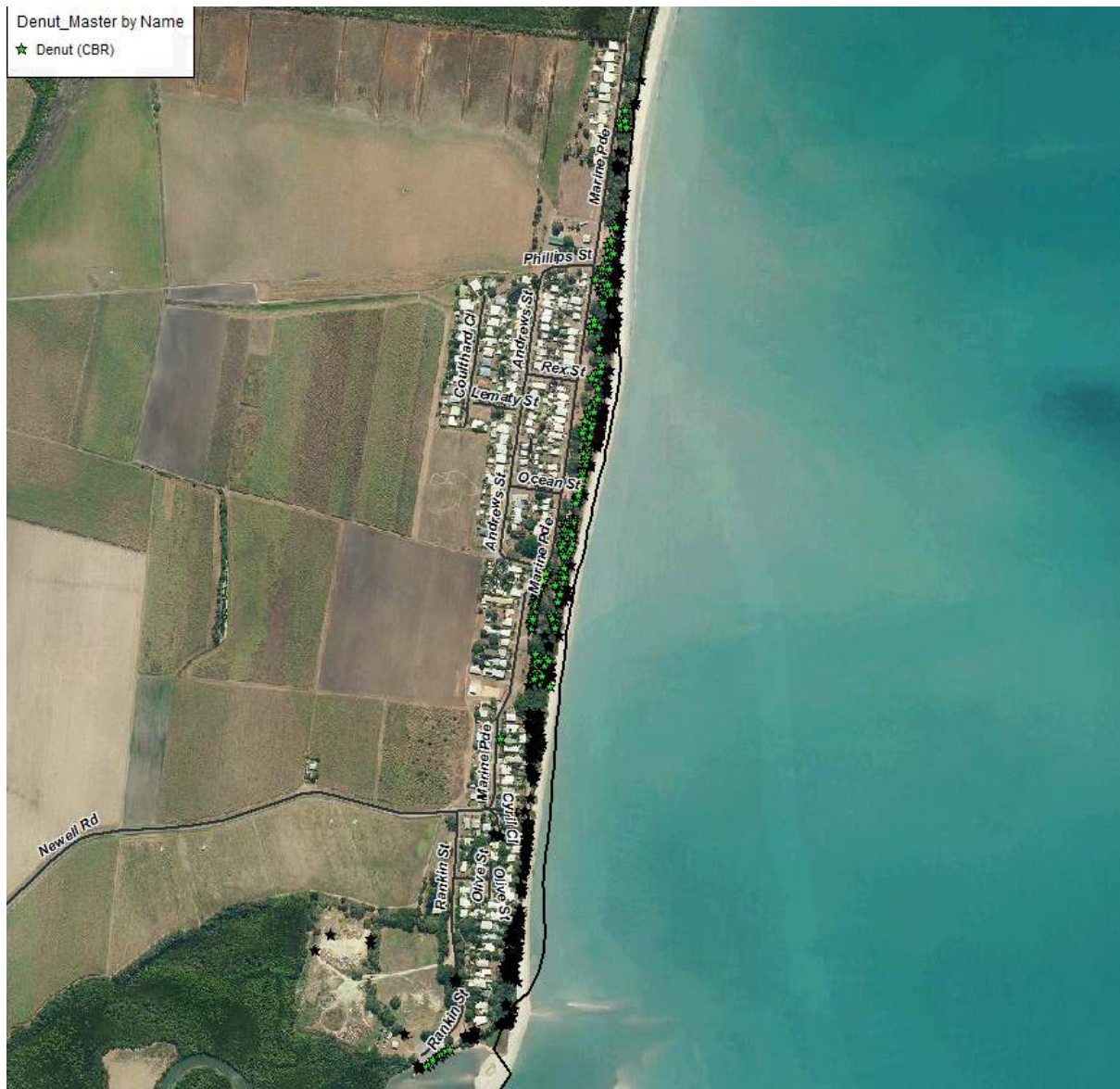


## Map 4 - Cooya Beach

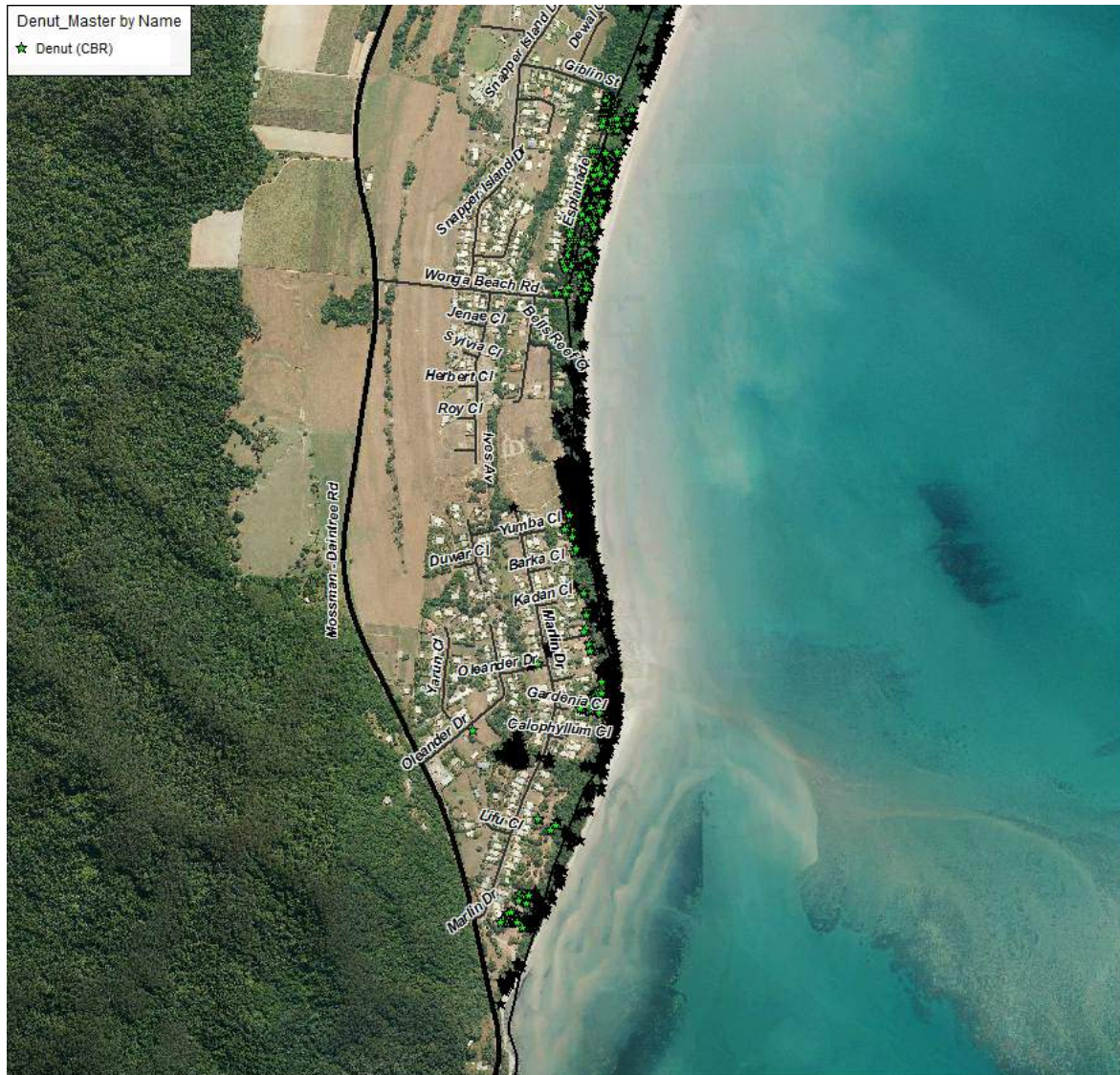




## Map 5 – Newell Beach



## Map 6 – Wonga Beach





## Map 7 – Rocky Point



## Map 8 – Daintree Ferry





## Map 9 – Cape Tribulation





## REMOVAL

Table 2 below details coconuts to be removed for public safety during 2017/18 and Figure 2 shows the relevant maps of coconuts to be removed.

**Table 2 – Proposed Coconuts to be removed**

Area	Location	Reason	Number of Palms	Map / Figure Reference
Port Douglas	Wharf Street (Coast Guard)	High risk to public safety	7	Map 11 / Figure 1&2
	Pecten Avenue	High risk to public safety	4	Map 12 / Figure 3
	Coral Drive	High risk to public safety	1	Map 13 / Figure 4
Wonga	The Esplanade (Caravan Park)	Defective / unsafe	17	Map 14 / Figure 5 & 6
Newell Beach	Marine Parade (Esplanade)	Defective / unsafe	1	Map 15 / 7 & 8
Mossman	Park Street (Caravan Park)	High risk to public safety	4	Map 16 / Figure 9
Cooya Beach	Jacaranda Street	High risk to public safety	1	Map 17 / Figure 10
<b>Total</b>			<b>35</b>	





**Figure 1 – High risk to public safety Wharf St (Coast Guard)**



**Figure 2 – High risk to public safety Wharf St (Coast Guard)**

	
<p><b>Figure 3 – High risk to public safety Pecten Ave Port Douglas</b></p>	<p><b>Figure 4 – High risk coconut over residents property Coral Dr Port Douglas</b></p>
	
<p><b>Figure 5 – High risk to public safety Wonga Beach Caravan Park</b></p>	<p><b>Figure 6 – Coconut Newell Beach encroached on by Ficus</b></p>

	
<b>Figure 7 – High risk to public safety Mossman Caravan Park</b>	<b>Figure 8 – High risk to public safety Jacaranda Street Cooya Beach</b>

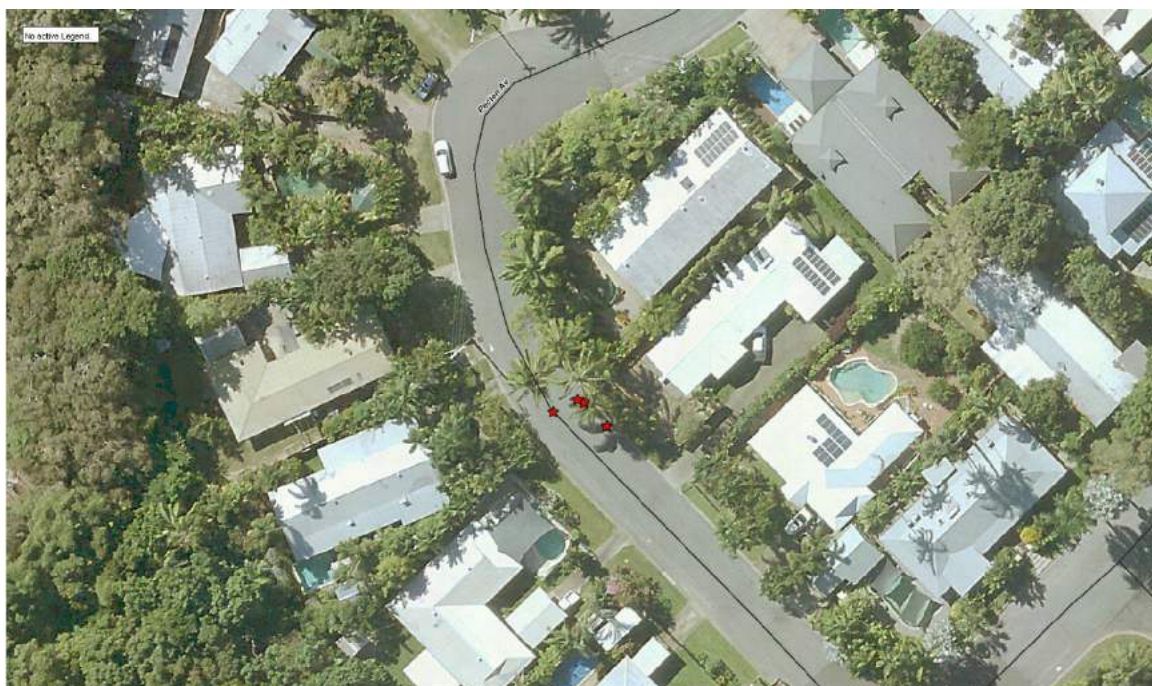


## FIGURE 2 – Location maps of coconuts

### Map 11 – Port Douglas Area – Coast Guard Wharf Street



### Map 12 – Port Douglas Area – Pecten Ave.









### Map 15 – Newell Beach – Marine Parade



### Map 16 – Mossman – Park Street



### Map 17 - Cooya Beach -Jacaranda Street





## **ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL AND RESTORATION PROJECTS**

### **Site 1 - Control in the Daintree Lowlands**

A trial site of littoral rainforest has been chosen north of the river based on environmental significance. A site inspection of Cowie Beach was conducted by Jabalbinna Rangers to assess the impacts of coconuts on littoral rainforest and cultural values. Further discussions with the traditional elder's are occurring to seek agreement on management options for this environmentally sensitive area.

### **Site 2 – Oak Beach Foreshore Restoration Project**

As per this years operational plan initiative council officers will commence the planning phase of restoring the foreshore zone at Oak Beach. The project will liaise with adjacent landholders and aims to address coconut management ongoing illegal clearing and encroachment issues.

## **LANDHOLDER MAINTENANCE AGREEMENTS**

Numerous landholders indicated that they would be willing to enter into a formal maintenance agreement with council to de-nut coconut palms adjacent to their property. It is proposed that council continue to pursue this arrangement with willing landholders.

The priority location for this period is southern end of Oak beach. Landowners will receive a mail out from council with the aim of formalising coconut maintenance arrangements between the parties. Many landholders at this location currently already pay to maintain the coconut palms. Formalising this arrangement confirms the palms will be retained and registered in the database.

To date a total of 11 maintenance agreements have been implemented for numerous coconut palms throughout the shire in locations such as Killaloe, Newell Beach and Port Douglas.