

3.1. MAYORAL MINUTES

1. DAINTREE FERRY

“That Council:

- 1. Temporarily suspend contract negotiations for contract 2019 – 084 Daintree Ferry Contract 2021 while it:*
- 2. Explores the option of a bridge crossing at various locations and the possible economic benefits to the region;*
- 3. Conducts further community consultation including the bridge option and details of the costs of the two ferry solution provided for in the currently negotiated contract; and*
- 4. Brings the results of the community consultation back to an Ordinary Council Meeting for further discussion and resolution.*

BACKGROUND

At its Ordinary Council Meeting of 3 December 2019, Council resolved to enter into contract 2019 – 084 Daintree Ferry Contract 2021 with Sirron Enterprises (QLD) Pty Ltd and to delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate, finalise and execute any and all matters associated with the contract.

As at the commencement of the caretaker period for the local government elections, Council officers were still negotiating details of the contract. Due to the nature of the contract and the rules that prevail during caretaker period, and because the contract was not yet finalised, the CEO did not sign it.

Prior to the tender and the contract currently under negotiation, a community engagement process was conducted by Council officer. During the engagement process, the CEO highlighted four options:

1. Remain with the current single ferry
2. Expand the capacity of a single ferry
3. Implement a two-ferry solution
4. Build a bridge

It was noted that while a bridge would be the least expensive long-term option and be the most effective at dealing with queues at peak periods, the bridge option was not under consideration because it would not provide the best tourist experience. Environmental concerns were also noted. At the time of the consultation, the two-ferry solution was noted as the next most effective means of managing queues based on expert analysis of the options. While specific costs could not be known prior to a tender process, it was noted that a two ferry solution would be significantly more expensive than the current configuration.

Given the cost of the two-ferry solution and the potential impact on residents, businesses and/or tourists, it is important that the community have more detail on the manner in which the additional costs will be funded. This may impact on the community’s preference for any proposed solution.

While it is possible that the two-ferry solution remains the most effective overall means for crossing the Daintree River, it is reasonable to pause the current negotiations so that all options including a bridge can be properly assessed. Further, the community needs to be able to have a say based on all options.

2. MOSSMAN RSL

“That Council:

- 1. note that the Mossman RSL has incurred expenses in the amount of \$1,734 to repair a water leak and is requesting that Council consider its currently due water bill to be an amount equal to its previous account;*
- 2. note the contribution that the Mossman RSL makes to the community through supporting returned services personnel; and*
- 3. grant the request and instruct Council officers to make the appropriate amendments to the water bill.*

BACKGROUND

The Mossman RSL is a vital and active community group that provides important support to returned services personnel and a broader role in the community reminding us of the importance of the sacrifices that these personnel have made. Recently, the Mossman RSL received a large water bill in the amount of \$1,055.34 due to a water leak. This reflects a daily usage of 3,813 litres vs. the average usage on their previous bill of 309.5 litres.

The Mossman RSL undertook repair works in the amount of \$1,734. While they acknowledge responsibility, they seek a reduction in order to support their on-going community work.

Council does not currently have a water leakage policy and has generally not granted concessions when the leak is the responsibility of the customer; however, given the current circumstances, Mossman RSL’s challenging financial position and essential role within the community, an exception is recommended.

3. PORT DOUGLAS POOL

“That Council:

- 1. Resolves to request the Chief Executive Officer to allocate in the Community Development 2019-20 Budget \$5,000 to investigate if the privately owned pool located next to the Oaks Resort in Port Douglas is a feasible option for Council to purchase; and*
- 2. Delegates authority to the Chief Executive Officer in accordance with Section 257 of the Local Government Act 2009 to determine and finalise any and all matters associated with this matter.”*

BACKGROUND

The privately owned pool located next to the Oaks Resort, formally the QT Resort located on Port Douglas Road, operated a commercial pool up until early 2020. The 25-metre, seven (7) lane swimming pool was constructed in the 1980’s and consists of approximately 1.7 hectares of land, a gymnasium and two (2) tennis courts.

Douglas Shire Council were previously approached to consider purchasing the pool and land in 2018 and again in 2019 after the owners have decided to close the pool for public and commercial use. The pool is popular with the public and preferred by commercial operators due to location of the pool of being in Port Douglas and lane hire options. In February 2019 over 100 community members signed a petition to advocate for Council to purchase the pool but not formally pursued by Council at the time.

Council Officers have only had informal observations of the pool once it was known that the pool was potentially for sale and preliminary observations indicate that significant repairs would need to occur for the pool and equipment. As the lot consists of a large proportion of land and other features such as the tennis court (Image 1), Council Officers will need to consider if the pool and gymnasium can be subdivided (Image 2). If considered Council Officers will need to undertake a survey plan to excise out some of existing larger parcels of land in which the pool, gymnasium and tennis courts exist.

4. DAINTREE MICRO GRID

“That Council:

Expresses its support for the Federal Government’s Daintree micro grid project and the need for reliable and clean energy for residents and businesses north of the Daintree River.

BACKGROUND

There is currently no mains power grid north of the Daintree River to Cape Tribulation with the exception of a few locations directly across from Daintree Village. Businesses and residents are responsible for their own energy needs and many use outdated, unreliable and polluting diesel generators.

The Federal Government is currently developing a plan for the installation of advanced micro-grid technology that will use a combination of solar power and hydrogen technology to provide clean and reliable energy. Connections to the system will be voluntary.

While Council does not have a direct role in the provision of power supply, Council plays an advocacy role for its businesses and residents. The Federal Government solution will provide essential services to which businesses and residents have a right. The solution will improve environmental outcomes as energy users move away from older polluting technologies and it will provide businesses with reliable energy at a price that will enable them to effectively compete for tourism business.

Previous Douglas Shire Councils have recognised that the provision of electricity to businesses and residents is an essential service and a Mayoral Minute from 18 November 2014 re-enforces this position.

Regardless of the outcome, Council officers will support the study through the provision of information and access to Council property and infrastructure. This is an obligation of Council irrespective of the differing views of the study. However, by passing this Mayoral Minute, Council will send an important signal to its ratepayers and to the market in terms of the support for the outcomes of the project.