

<p>ORDINARY MEETING</p> <p>24 MARCH 2015</p>	<p>5.6</p>
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REPORT FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Linda Cardew – Chief Executive Officer

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 late February to mid March 2015.

BACKGROUND:

In Council's first year an overview of the administration's operations was presented to Council on a regular basis. 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.

As in 2014, the administration continues to extend an open invitation to the community to provide feedback, at any time, on any aspect of Council's service delivery, or on broader issues that pertain directly to Council's business. 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 Partners and Participation

Officers from the CEO Unit have submitted an application for the Queensland Reconciliation Awards based on the development of the Douglas Shire Council Corporate Plan 2014 – 2019 and the initiatives, projects and significant achievement conducted by Council to date. It is anticipated we will know an outcome by June.

Officers have also worked closely with the Mossman Parent and Community Engagement Program (PaCE) and Douglas Cluster Schools which aims to support Indigenous parents to be more involved in their children's education; improve Indigenous student attendance rates; and involve Indigenous community, parents and elders more in the school environments. Assisting PaCE in developing a Draft Strategic & Action Plan.

Council officers have also met with the Traditional Owners and discuss the Mossman Gorge Cemetery and Council's report on the Mossman Gorge rezoning/ subdivision.

On 10 March, at the invitation of the Local Government Managers Association, an officer gave a presentation at the LGMA forum in Brisbane regarding Community Engagement and how Douglas prioritises engagement.

Officers from the CEO Unit have been involved in a number of initiatives and networks since 10 February 2015:

- On 3 March officers arranged the RADF presentation to the successful applicants
- Participated in the recruitment process of the new PaCE Coordinator
- Worked with GBRMPA, Reef Guardian program on environmental campaign which includes professional photos of Council staff carrying out tasks which protect the reef
- Planning with Mossman Gorge Interagency Network to conduct a Job Expo in Mossman Gorge and Mossman
- Activated support procedures for vulnerable and remote members of the community in the event of a cyclone, twice.
- Progressed ANZAC Day proceedings in conjunction with the RSL and other key stakeholders
- Assisted with the recruitment of the Community Liaison Officer and the Organisational Business Support Unit positions
- Worked with Partners in Recovery regarding non – specialist homelessness service providers
- Developed and distributed the ‘Arts in Douglas – Have your say!’ survey
- Attendance at the CAN meeting, the Liquor Accord, Youth Network, Public Safety, Indigenous Inter Agency, TPDD information session.

The Daintree Gateway signage and ferry Yalanji artwork projects have seen targeted consultation take place with the Traditional Owners of the land that the signage will sit upon, along with consultation of the key stakeholders for the interpretative signage such as Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Wet Tropics Management Authority, Tourism Port Douglas Daintree and the Daintree Marketing Cooperative.

Economic Development

Officers have been involved with a number of economic development initiatives since 10 February. These include but are not limited to:

- Assisting with research and development of concepts for the Mossman Town Centre upgrade prior to seeking community views
- Review and evaluation of the Community Support Program and the Event Strategy
- Meeting with the Tourism North Queensland consultant regarding the Regional Events Strategy
- Final draft of the Access Douglas and “missed Business Resource”
- Promotion of Kill-a-Watt energy saving campaign
- Progression of the Bloomfield signage project

Funding

The second round of the Community Support Program closed on 2 March 2015. There was a good response to the information and grant writing session that was held on 5 February with a number of those that attended submitting an application. The Regional Arts Development Fund also closed on 2 March with a number of projects submitted.

Officers also provided clarification regarding eligibility and the funding guidelines to individuals who were unable to attend the sessions regarding their projects.

Officers source funding opportunities and update the Grant Funding workbook, Council’s website and Facebook page on a regular basis ensuring opportunities for funding are promoted throughout the Shire.

Web site and Facebook

The web site is continually updated with new features and tools to ensure we are keeping our communities informed of the changes and opportunities for the Shire.

Some of the updates have included the <http://douglas.qld.gov.au/facilities-and-recreation/community-halls-centres-and-sports-facilities/> in relation to Accessibility along with registered Tenders <http://douglas.qld.gov.au/business/tenders/>

With Tropical Cyclone Nathan first passing our door weekending 13 March and returning again at the time of writing this report, Council's Facebook page is the most immediate means of communicating with our communities. Our top posts are Flood/Storm surge warning and Douglas Shire well prepared for Cyclone Nathan. Council has posted 60 items since 11 February, with a total reach of 88,332. Each post was viewed by 1472 users.

CORPORATE SERVICES

GOVERNANCE

Work is continuing on the Delegations Register with the Governance staff updating Council's current register of Council to CEO delegations to now include all the current changes to the acts and regulations that were updated to January 2015. This work was completed in line with Delegation service provided by LGAQ.

Governance also continues to work on the co-ordination of the policy reviews. Each Manager is reviewing former Cairns Regional Council policies specific to their work area and ensuring relevance to the new Douglas. Once this work has been completed a report will be presented to Council.

Trial and testing has been completed on the new Minutes & Agenda Software program. The project team are pleased that the program will not only assist in the preparation of the agenda but will have broader application across the organisation as a whole. Agenda and Minute templates are now in the final stages of development with report writer training in this software to be rolled out mid/late April.

Human Resources has been busy recruiting for four vacant positions. These positions are now close to finalisation with the candidates selected and new staff ready to be introduced into the organisation.

Disaster Management training is also well underway with close to 50 staff recently completing chainsaw training, traffic management training and asbestos awareness training.

The Frontline Services electronic booking system for Council facilities is nearing completion, with the final project plans being reviewed. This electronic system will streamline the process for our customers by allowing them to view availability and reserve the facilities online. This will also create efficiencies for the Frontline Team who can then be tasked to other activities. Council is still waiting for the final audit report due from the Internal Auditors on Cash Handling Procedures, however early indications are that the processes are very strong.

All staff with direct staff reports attended Mandatory WH&S Manager/Supervisor training in early February. This training was facilitated by John Egan from Local Government Workcare. The WH&S committee met in February to plan for the year ahead.

Property continues to be a very busy area for Council, with staff in this area dealing with multiple issues ranging from native title through to providing comment on the sale of unallocated state land. The team is currently seeking feedback on these issues from other departments within Council and once this feedback is received there will be multiple reports progressing through to Council meetings.

Finance and Information Technology

Council has completed its part of the QTC (Queensland Treasury Corporation) credit review process, which involved the population of the QTC Local Government Forecasting Model and a presentation of strategic information to QTC representatives. QTC will now be undertaking an analysis of the data provided and commence drafting a report for the Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning, which will include an assessment of Council's financial sustainability rating. The draft report on QTC's assessment is expected to be received in May 2015.

A high level budget review of Council's current budget has been undertaken and is being presented to this Council meeting for consideration and adoption. As previously advised, key adjustments required as part of this review were also incorporated into the QTC model data to reflect an updated projection for the 2014/15 financial year and any associated changes in subsequent years of the long term forecast.

Work has now also commenced on the preparation of Council's 2015/16 draft budget and a schedule of proposed Council workshops relating to this process has been distributed to Councillors.

On 5 March Council issued water usage notices covering the period from mid October 2014 to mid-February 2015. These notices have a due date for payment of 9 April 2015. Council has also issued reminder notices for unpaid rates (of amounts greater than \$50) that were levied in the January 2015 half yearly rate notices.

Supplementary rate notices are also due to be issued later this month for new properties and for amendments to properties as a result of valuation changes and adjustments to utility charges since the last full rate notice issue.

The recent implementation of eServices has proven to be quite successful, with Council receiving many rate payments via this process.

As part of Council's debt recovery program Council has now proceeded to the serving of summonses to those ratepayers who have not responded to Council's repeated requests for payment of their rates or have not entered into some form of payment arrangement. Ratepayers will be given 28 days from receipt of their summons to pay all overdue amounts, including legal costs. Any unpaid amounts will be listed in court proceedings for judgement purposes.

The Audio / Video upgrades for the Council chambers have been completed. Staff training has occurred in the new solution for generating, managing and distributing collaborative documents, such as Council agendas and minutes. Implementation of the solution will occur during late April. The first stage (scoping) of migration of data from Council's former Dataworks software to Council's current records management software has commenced.

Arrangements have been made to progress the implementation of Wi-Fi within Council's Mossman Library and Port Douglas Library Kiosk with an expected completion date in May, subject to the provision of telecommunication services.

Library

During February and March the Library has continued to build on programs and services offered to the people of Douglas.

“Dads Read” was introduced in March and is held on the first Saturday of the month. This program is lead by Bill. The program aims to encourage fathers to invest in their child’s future by reading to them each day.

The “Lego and K/nex” for Junior Builders” continues to be popular with boys and girls from 7 to 15 years with 42 children attending in February. Children meet each Thursday for an enjoyable, open-ended creative activity that encourages problem-solving and hands on engineering and stimulates conversation.

Douglas Libraries, along with other Queensland Libraries, have signed a Service Level Agreement for *Best Start Family Literacy Initiative*” with State Library of Queensland.

The Team Leader Libraries and Library Assistant, Pauline will attend the “Small Rural and Regional Libraries Professional Development” week in Brisbane in March. It is expected that more information on the “Best Start Family Literacy Initiative” will be available at this time. The Library was successful in obtaining a \$500 travel bursary to support attendance at the “Small Rural and Regional Libraries Professional Development” week.

During February 5361 people visited their Library; 119 people joined; 7520 items were borrowed; 18 inter-library loans processed and 201 people attended library programs and activities.

Organisational Business Support Unit

In conjunction with Council’s overall Records Management Strategy, the Unit has commenced a project on collating, recording and filing of property records relating to building and planning applications to achieve a registry to enable quick identification of plans. Supplementing this work is the ongoing task of electronically profiling all building applications. This work will ensure security of Council records.

As part of the 2013/14 Internal Audit Plan, advice was sought from Council’s Internal Auditors on common user functionality that a better practice contract management register should contain also taking into account legislative compliance. With this information a new contract register has been implemented to capture all contracts established since January 2014.

OPERATIONS

DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT

Planning Scheme

Councillor workshops have continued and the current schedule is complete. Targeted informal consultation will be undertaken in April.

Planning

A larger than usual number of applications have been lodged in recent weeks. A list of planning applications and links to the common material for each application is on the Council website. This format enables easy access for Councillors and the public.

Appeals

An appeal has been lodged to the Building and Development Committee in relation to Lot 11, The Lakes Port Douglas regarding conditions imposed by Council as concurrence agency in a building siting dispensation application. The matter will be responded to in accordance with the applicable legislative rules.

Regulatory Services

Local Laws/Environmental Health/Plumbing

The unit continues to be very busy with a combination of permit and licensing renewals and administration and well and enforcement activities. Actions include:-

- Preparations for Cyclone Nathan
- Development of a data base to enable extreme weather warnings to be sent by text to mooring occupants
- Following the portable advertising and goods on footpath audit, renewals have issued and businesses with unregistered items have been written to and sent the appropriate forms for registration
- Council has been liaising the RSPCA in relation to investigations regarding horse neglect
- Operators of camper van rentals have been written to and advised of camping regulations and permitted camping and caravan areas in the Shire
- With the recent rainfall officers have increased inspections of overgrown blocks and maintenance activities have been undertaken by the majority of owners
- Patrols have been increased in Wonga in response to continuing issues regarding dog wandering at large. A dog trap has been deployed.

Waste

Officers have conducted on-site inspections with relevant contractors in relation to battery and ferrous metals collections and the impending capping at Killaloe landfill.

Reviews have been undertaken as to the viability of a kerbside general waste collection over the Daintree River, options for waste collection at Degarra and the number of commercial collections being undertaken. Councillors have been briefed regarding the review findings.

Assessment of the ferrous metals and battery collection tender conducted via FNQROC is complete and the contract will be awarded imminently.

Execution of the capital works program is continuing.

Actions have been undertaken to secure the transfer stations and landfill in preparation for cyclone Nathan.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Disaster Management

Staff that may work in the Local Disaster Coordination Centre and the Storm Tide Cyclone Shelter have recently received training in the operations of each facility as part of Council's disaster preparedness.

March 2015 to date has been a busy period with Cyclone Nathan and there has been a great deal of activity in testing pre-preparedness and response to issues as they arise.

Staff and some members of the public have provided excellent information back to the Local Disaster management Group that assists in decision making and updates to the District and State Disaster management Groups.

Civil Works

Maintenance teams have been busy with tree, drainage, mowing, spraying weeds and undertaking road pavement maintenance for both sealed and unsealed road sections.

Capital works projects over the past 2 months have included the construction of a new footbridge over the Grant Street drain. Improvements to Rex Smeal Park has involved the installation of pipes to transport stormwater from Wharf Street to the outlet area in Rex Smeal Park.

Extensions to culverts in Ironbark Road are in the process of construction and are scheduled for completion in the week ending 20 March 2015.

Additionally, the concrete footpath renewal in William Street, near the bus zone was completed as shown in the photo below.



Training of staff is an ongoing process and over the past 2 months a number of employees have undertaken refresher training for chainsaw operation, 4WD recovery and traffic management level 2.



(Above) 4WD driver training undertaken by Infrastructure staff to improve driver skills and recovery

Public and Natural Areas

The Port Douglas parks and gardens crew completed the Barrier Street roundabout vegetation removal to improve traffic safety. After lengthy negotiations with DTMR the roundabout was replanted and turfed. Works also commenced at Nautilus Street after extensive community consultation prior to clearing the road reserve of unsuitable species. The garden beds have been marked out and will soon be irrigated, mulched and planted.

A small section of Four Mile Beach foreshore area and creek was revegetated at the end of Cowie Street with native plants. These works addressed vegetation encroachment and the removal of inappropriate planting.

Works commenced on the capital works project at the Port Douglas Community Hall. The footpaths have now been revamped with new 'Replas' edging and fresh gravel. Further works on the gardens will continue over the coming months.



(Above) Completed landscaping works at Barrier Street – Port Douglas



Reconstructed gravel path and edging at the Port Douglas Community Hall

Construction of the hardscape design on the Port Douglas roundabout commenced 16 March 2015.



Port Douglas Roundabout on Cook Highway

The Mossman parks and gardens crew completed the Daintree Gateway landscaping works. This included the construction of gardens, planting, mulching and irrigating around the toilet block. Some finishing touches are still required at the new toilet block site. Top dressing of the surrounding ground and removal of larger rock aggregate from the site will take place shortly.

On the expiry of an existing contract, requests for quotations have been sought for the mowing of specific areas in Mossman.

The Front Street Mossman streetscape capital works project commenced the planning and design phase. A landscape architect has been engaged to draft a plan which will be used for discussion with the Mossman business community and residents, proposing staged works.

All shade sails were dropped as part of the Cyclone Nathan preparation. The shade sails will remain down until after the cyclone season.



The pest management/natural areas crew completed a total of 202 hours of treating declared pest weeds over an area of 3.8 Ha. The majority of time was spent treating tobacco weed and giant sensitive plant on the Daintree Coast. A total of 253 trees were planted along the Cassowary Creek bank stabilisation project. Additionally, the Woobadda Creek bridge site was revegetated with 181 endemic native plants.

A total of 26 feral pigs were caught and destroyed in the last month. A total of 2,143 plants were planted from our nursery; 800 of which were from sales, council projects and community giveaways.

Staff also assisted in the Yellow Crazy Ant Regional Taskforce. Douglas hosted the Biosecurity Regional Technical Workshop held on 26 March 2015 and the Regional Natural Asset Management Advisory Committee meeting held in Port Douglas on 27 February.

Staff in the Public Spaces group continued to be trained in a range of skills during the past 2 months including Traffic Management Level 1, 2 & 3 and Remote First Aid Training.

Fleet

Asset Management and maintenance has been the focus for fleet services over the past few months. The mechanics have been kept busy keeping the Council fleet on the road during this period of high maintenance during the wet season. Over the coming months, fleet services will be completing a review of maintenance scheduling, reporting and fleet procedures and systems. This review will help identify assets that need to be replaced and serviced.

Facilities Maintenance

A new variable speed control unit has been installed at the Mossman Pool improving safety and efficiency. Council can now operate the pump at the water impellers optimal speed and reduce pump flow rates to suit the needs of the pool. This will reduce energy consumption and wear and tear.



(Above) Mossman Pool New Switch Board

Progress on the Daintree Gateway Toilet Block is progressing well with the toilets now operational.



(Above) the new toilet block, including the newly installed gardens.

Port Douglas Sports Complex

With the break in the weather at the end of February the Net Ball Courts have been successfully re-surfaced ready for the upcoming season.

Works for the month of March include:

1. Replacement of the fans in Mossman Admin air-conditioners;
2. Rear wall of the Mossman Depot main shed to have all asbestos removed;
3. New LED lights to be ordered and installed in Port Douglas Community Hall; and
4. Solar LED lights to be installed over BBQ tables on Port Esplanade.

Water and Wastewater**Sewer infrastructure improvement projects**

Capital projects are progressing well and in particular the process improvements at Mossman WWTP. Contractors have installed the new waste activated sludge (WAS) and return activated sludge (RAS) lines and these alterations will relieve hydraulic pressure on the clarifier tank. Contractors are also in the process of cleaning accumulated sand from Mossman oxidation ditch and so far two semi loads of accumulated sand has been removed. The sand is carted away to Springmount waste facility by the bio-solids contractor. At the Port Douglas WWTP, the new gravity drainage deck (GDD) was successfully installed. The GDD is a cost effective and energy efficient way to thicken sludge. The old GDD was in service for 18 years before it became maintenance intensive. The new improved GDD will improve bio-solid handling and deliver a higher percentage bio-solid product.

Water Supply Regulator

Douglas Shire Council is now operating under our own Drinking Water Quality Management Plan (DWQMP) as the DSC DWQMP was approved on 26th February 2015 by Queensland Water Supply Regulator in terms of the *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008*. Water and Wastewater was also officially informed about the mandatory external audit scheduled for February 2016. In preparation for an external audit, an internal audit was conducted by a certified water auditor. This was the first time Douglas water operations staff have been exposed to an audit situation and the audit greatly assist in preparations for the official audit next year.

Trade Waste

Between 10-12 February 2015, 6 water and wastewater staff members attended training on the monitoring of Trade Waste. This is a nationally recognised course and prepared the staff to coordinate, implement and report on trade waste monitoring activities.

After analysis of Council's Authority system and associated modules relating to the trade waste register and taking into account legislative requirements, workflow processes for actions and outcomes were implemented in early March, 2015. There are 29 Trade Waste businesses that have been issued renewal invoices/applications, and 4 change of ownership applications received. 5 new businesses have also applied for trade waste approvals. There have been 17 inspections undertaken during February and March 2015. These include inspections for new businesses, and annual inspections. Compliant trade waste discharges will greatly improve Council's maintenance of the sewerage system and assist in running of the wastewater plants.

Water and Wastewater 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). Water samples were taken in the 4 water supply schemes and tested by a NATA accredited laboratory and the Douglas Water Laboratory for physical, chemical and microbiological parameters. All tested parameters in water samples were compliant with ADW Guidelines during this period. Wastewater compliance samples are taken from bio-solids, final effluent, receiving waters and bores. All parameters tested were compliant with licence conditions.

Cyclone Nathan

Staff prepared well in advance for the initial effects of Cyclone Nathan. Water storages were brought up to capacity in anticipation of interruptions and contingency measures were put in place at all plants. Whilst intakes were blocked and plant operations disrupted the water supply was not compromised. Similarly although there was an impact on the wastewater system this was confined to a small number of pump stations which able to be quickly controlled. A number of staff worked tirelessly through the night and weekend to ensure essential services were maintained.

National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) Program

Approved funding from the Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) currently totals \$13,424,245 with an additional \$1,930,277 yet to be approved. Funding variations totalling \$1,111,712 have been submitted to QRA and have been approved at \$905,839. The non-approved amount relates to escalation and contingency components and Council are in discussion with QRA as to the reasons for the assessment.

Geotechnical investigations on the landslip defects commenced 11 March 2015 and are anticipated to be completed by 20 March 2015, weather permitting. Survey investigations of the same sites are also occurring.

The NDRRA Community Liaison Officer position has been filled, with the Council officer commencing on 16 March 2015.

An NDDRA article was front page in Port Douglas & Mossman Gazette on 19 February 2015. Additional community notification for potential traffic impacts for the geotechnical investigation work was provided through Council's website & Facebook sites, newspaper & community noticeboards.

Documentation for two road rehabilitation construction packages has been completed and tenders were available for a road package north of the Daintree River and a road rehabilitation package south of the Daintree River from 11 March. Both tenders close on 10 April, with a pre-lodgement tender meeting scheduled for 18 March.

A landslip construction package is expected to go to tender in May. Construction activities for all packages are anticipated to be complete by December 2015.

A detailed report on all NDRRA activities will be presented to Council at a future Ordinary Meeting.



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, 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.