

5.7. BUILDING BETTER REGIONS FUND ROUND 5 - CO-CONTRIBUTION

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RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Endorses applications to Building Better Regions Fund Round Five for:

- a) **Mossman Shire Hall electrical, mechanical and building upgrades (including air conditioning)**
- b) **Marrs Creek Cycle & Pedestrian Bridge and shared path to Mossman Gorge Centre**
- c) **Cooya Beach Reservoir Connection**

2. Commits a 10% contribution in the 2021-22 Budget towards eligible project costs for each project, if successful

3. Delegates authority to the Chief Executive Officer under Section 257 of the *Local Government Act 2009* to administer all matters in relation to the above.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Australian Government Building Better Regions Fund (BBRF) aims to create jobs, drive economic growth and build stronger regional communities into the future with grants of \$20,000.00 to \$10M to cover 50% or more of eligible project costs.

Incorporated not-for-profit, local government agencies or body or non-distributing co-operatives are eligible to apply.

Council has an opportunity to apply for funding for investment ready projects aligning with the funding program.

This report seeks Council's endorsement of projects, as well as a commitment to contribute cash towards each project if successful.

Applications close 5 March 2021.

BACKGROUND

The Australian Government announced \$200 million in the 2020-21 Budget for a fifth round of the BBRF with \$100 million to support tourism-related infrastructure projects focused on mitigating the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on a region's tourism industry and \$100 million to fund general infrastructure projects and community investment projects.

The Infrastructure Projects Stream funds construction of new infrastructure, or the upgrade or extension of existing infrastructure.

The Community Investments Stream funds community development activities including, but not limited to, new or expanded local events, strategic regional plans, leadership and capability building activities.

Council officers reviewed Council's Ten-Year Capital Works program and shortlisted projects aligning with the Infrastructure Stream. While there were additional projects aligning with the objectives of this program, projects were not considered investment ready, where construction would be able to commence within 12 weeks of executing a funding agreement.

Investment ready projects require:

- authority of the land or infrastructure owner to undertake the project at the nominated site(s).
- Confirmed funding contributions from all sources, supported by formal documentation.
- All required regulatory and or development approvals.
- Finalised project designs and costings.

COMMENT

Additional eligibility requirements require evidence of how applicants will provide their share of project costs. Applicants making a cash contribution must submit an Accountant Declaration Form with the application.

As funds have not been budgeted, Council approval is sought to satisfy the additional eligibility requirement.

Under the Guidelines, grant funding will be up to either 50% or 75% of eligible project costs, depending on the project's location. Based on each project's latitude and longitude, the remoteness classification for all projects is Outer Regional Australia, requiring a contribution of \$1 for every \$1 requested unless seeking a co-funding exemption under exceptional circumstances.

On the basis that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on Council's financial and staff resources since March 2020, and the broader the local economy, heavily reliant on international and domestic tourism, a partial exemption will be sought.

PROPOSAL

The proposal is for Council to:

1. Endorse applications to Building Better Regions Fund Round Five for:

- a) Mossman Shire Hall electrical, mechanical and building upgrades (including air-conditioning)
- b) Marrs Creek Cycle & Pedestrian Bridge and shared path to Mossman Gorge Centre
- c) Cooya Beach Reservoir Connection Project

2. Commit a 10% contribution in the 2021-22 Budget towards eligible project costs for each project, if successful

3. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer under Section 257 of the *Local Government Act 2009* to administer all matters in relation to the above.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The total project costs for each project is estimated to be as follows:

- Mossman Shire Hall electrical, mechanical and building upgrades \$770k (GST Exc)
- Marris Creek Cycle & Pedestrian Bridge and shared path to Mossman Gorge Centre \$2.5M (GST Exc)
- Cooya Beach Reservoir Connection \$1.5M (GST Exc)

The opportunity to secure grant funding for the projects, with minimal contributions from Council will reduce the financial impost on ratepayers while creating economic and social benefits for residents, businesses and visitors of the Shire.

If projects are successful, funding contributions would need to be allocated to the 2021-22 financial year. Projects must be completed before 30 June 2023.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Should the projects be successfully funded, project risks will be mitigated through the systematic application of internal project management systems. Project management will be the responsibility of Project Officers, supported by officers from finance, procurement and corporate communications and community engagement. The project managers will be responsible for ensuring all conditions of the funding agreement are met.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic: The funding program aims to create jobs, drive economic growth and build stronger regional communities. Projects will also provide opportunities for Indigenous employment. Improvements to Mossman Shire Hall will increase the comfort level and enable year-round use for community, commercial and private functions, stimulating economic activity and community vibrancy.

Environmental: The Cooya Reservoir Connection project will facilitate water security for the Cooya Beach residential area. Materials used in the shared pathway project will contain recycled fibres.

Social: The Mossman Shire Hall Upgrade Project will enable a local community facility to be used year-round and increase social events and functions with improved air circulation, noise reduction and improved access for people with disabilities.

A shared path to Mossman Gorge Centre enables increased connectivity and safety for pedestrians and cyclists between the two centres and the Mossman Gorge community

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

Corporate Plan 2019-2024 Initiatives:

Theme 1 - Celebrating Our Communities

Douglas Shire Council embraces the diversity of our communities and values the contribution that all people make to the Shire. We recognise that it is a core strength of the region.

We acknowledge our past so that it may guide us in the future. We recognise the wrongs done to our Indigenous community and we actively seek to reconcile so that we may all benefit from and enjoy our Shire. We acknowledge early European settlers who forged an agricultural base for our economy and we welcome all new arrivals as part of our broader community.

Goal 1 - *We will celebrate the diversity of our community and ensure that all infrastructure, programs, and services are underpinned with inclusiveness and accessibility.*

Goal 2 - *We will deliver programs and services that protect and enhance the liveability of our beautiful Shire.*

Goal 3 - *We will develop programs that promote health, well-being and safety in the community.*

Theme 2 - Fostering Sustainable Economic Growth

A robust economy is at the heart of a thriving community and enables investment in environmental protection. While our remoteness is a key attribute, it also presents challenges for attracting new business and investment. We must also meet the challenges of fierce competition in the tourism sector. Council will partner with industry to build, diversify and promote the Douglas economy. Council will design and deliver infrastructure, strategies and services that support the local economy and businesses.

Goal 1 - *We will build appropriate infrastructure and deliver services that connect and support businesses.*

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:

Advocate

Council makes representation on behalf of the community on important issues, funding opportunities, projects and programs. Council will use its influence to seek the best outcomes for the community.

Builder/Owner	Council makes a significant investment every year in the infrastructure that underpins the Shire through its capital works program. Council will manage its assets with appropriate frameworks and deliver its projects through robust project management.
Custodian	Council owns and manages infrastructure, facilities, reserves, resources and natural areas. In fulfilling its role as custodian, Council will be mindful of the community, the economy, the environment, and good governance.
Service Provider	Council provides many services to the community from roads and waste services to libraries and recreational facilities. Services evolve over time and it is the Council's mission to ensure that these services are appropriate, delivered efficiently, and designed with the customer at the centre.

CONSULTATION

Internal:	Management Team, Councillors, Property Officer, Grants Officer, Planning Officer, Arts and Culture Officer, Building Facilities Officer, Project Engineer, Coordinator Civil Operations, Project Office, Community Liaison Officer, Indigenous Liaison Officer.
External:	Regional Development Australia Far North Queensland, Economic consultant, user groups of Mossman Shire Hall, heritage consultant, Douglas Access and Inclusion Group

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Mossman Shire Hall

Current and former regular users of Mossman Shire Hall, along with Douglas Historical Society and Douglas Access and Inclusion were provided information on the proposed works to Mossman Shire Hall.

Marrs Creek Cycle and Pedestrian Bridge and Shared Pathway to the Mossman Gorge Visitor Centre

Mossman Gorge Shared Pathway is identified in the Douglas Shire Planning Scheme, Transport Network (Pedestrian Cycle) Overlay Map and the Far North Queensland Principal Cycle Network Plan developed by the Queensland State Government in consultation with Council. Both documents have undergone extensive consultation with government sectors, businesses and the wider public.

Cooya Reservoir

Cooya Beach Reservoir is subject to an infrastructure requirement as part of the Stage 6 subdivision development. In addition to the stage 6 planning requirements the project will also improve council's firefighting flow demands. All projects will inform the community prior to works being carried out, as well as during and after the projects are completed.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil