

DAINTREE TOILET FACILITIES

Linda Cardew: Chief Executive Officer

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council resolves to advocate on behalf of the community for adequate and well-maintained public toilets in the National Park north of the River.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Members of the community north of the Daintree River are concerned about the recent demolition of the Cow Bay toilets. This report formalises information provided to Councillors on 13 April 2015 regarding the responsibilities for the Cow Bay toilets and the actions currently being undertaken by staff in working with the Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (QPWS) to secure adequate and well-maintained visitor toilet facilities.

BACKGROUND:

Public toilets at Cow Bay were owned and maintained by the State Government. Over a period of years the toilets had deteriorated to the extent that their use constituted a risk of injury to the public. The QPWS took action for reasons of public safety and demolished the toilets. Council staff contacted QPWS to determine the cause of the removal and reported the circumstances to Councillors and to the community through Council's Facebook page.

REPORT:

On 13 April 2015 Councillors and the community were advised that the Cow Bay toilets were owned and maintained by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS). Council had no responsibility or arrangement to manage the toilet facilities at Cow Bay, nor had there been any discussion with QPWS to take over the management of the toilets.

Council staff were not involved in the decision to demolish or remove the toilets. On contacting QPWS, Council officers were advised that QPWS had to demolish the toilet block after a recent building inspection identified a number of critical structural failures that posed the risk of causing personal injury. The holding tank had also deteriorated to the point it posed a serious environmental risk. For safety reasons QPWS then removed these facilities.

Council officers will be meeting and working with QPWS to discuss the provision and ongoing maintenance of toilet facilities north of the Daintree River, and consulting with the local community to develop a suitable solution for toilet facilities north of the river.

Council has put in new amenities facilities in the car park on the southern side of the Daintree Gateway this year. Officers have also undertaken an investigation of the ability to upgrade the temporary toilets placed at Thornton Beach by Council more than a decade ago and are also in discussions to assume responsibility for the amenities facilities in the vicinity of the Cape Tribulation playground in Avalon St, which Council opened last year. Council also maintains toilet facilities in Diwan.

At this stage staff are not aware of any QPWS plans to rebuild toilets in Cow Bay. QPWS has advised that there are currently nineteen toilets in the area and nine new toilets being built to replace the Kulki toilets that were damaged by arson in 2014, making a total of twenty-eight toilets.

PROPOSAL:

That Council acknowledge the work that is currently being undertaken by QPWS and resolve to advocate on behalf of the community for adequate and well-maintained public toilets in the National Park north of the River.

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE:

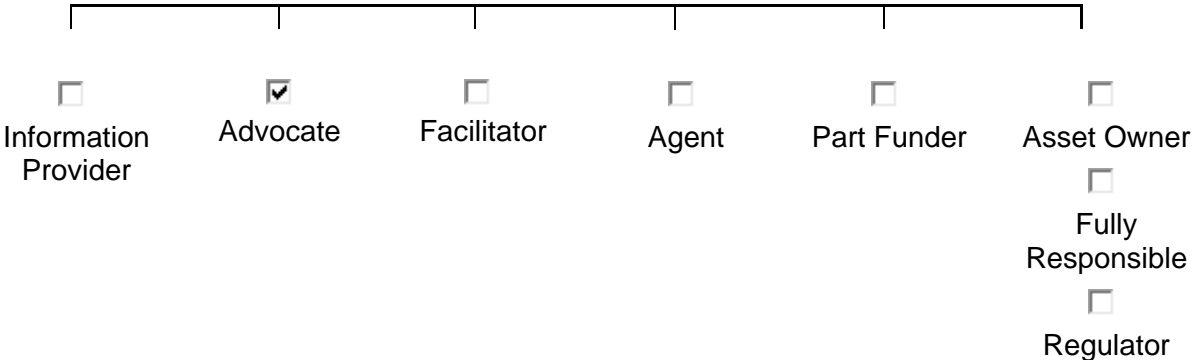
This report has been prepared in accordance with Council’s Corporate Plan 2014 – 2019:

- 1.2.1 Advocate for state and federally funded services in identified areas of need.*
- 1.2.4 Network, advocate and partner with stakeholders to achieve positive outcomes.*
- 4.2.2 Provide leadership to secure beneficial social, environmental and economic outcomes for the Shire.*

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: Supporting communities and groups by advocating for certain actions from other organisations (usually other levels of government).

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

As Council is involved in an advocacy role there are no financial or resource implications with regards to progressing this matter.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS:

Being the strongest voice for the communities of Douglas, Council is in a key position to convey the communities' concerns to other tiers of government.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:

ECONOMIC: The area north of the Daintree River has a high dependency on tourism and a reduction in amenities has the potential to adversely affect the visitor experience.

ENVIRONMENTAL: Properly maintained facilities north of the Daintree River will ensure minimal damage to ecosystems situated in this area.

SOCIAL: The provision of public toilets is a fundamental social amenity.

INTERNAL/EXTERNAL CONSULTATION:

Council staff have consulted with officers from QPWS. Timeframes have not allowed for formal community engagement on this issue and much will depend on the outcomes of discussions with QPWS. However Council has received feedback via the news and social media on the reduction of amenities and has endeavoured to keep the public updated on information obtained through posts on Council's Facebook.

ATTACHMENTS:

Nil