

<b>ORDINARY MEETING</b> <b>18 AUGUST 2015</b>	<b>6.3</b>
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NOTICE OF MOTION – CR MELCHERT

DEPARTMENT OF MAIN ROADS ROAD SIDE MOWING

**NOTICE OF MOTION**

I hereby give Notice of my intention to move the following Motion at the Council meeting scheduled for Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> August 2015.

*“That Council seek urgent discussions with the Department of Main Roads and Member for Cook Mr Billy Gordon to facilitate a change in the Departmental works ” intervention levels” so that the Main Roads roadsides in the Shire North of Yule Point are mown by the nominated contractor (or by Council when it is the nominated contractor) when the grass height reaches around 500mm and that where possible the Department fund the mowing width to at least 4.8 metres, and completely around access driveways.”*

**BACKGROUND**

I have received many complaints about the height of grass along Main Roads in the Shire, including the section of road between Port Douglas and Mossman. Residents are concerned not just because the areas look untidy but more particularly because the grass grows so high the roads are seen as being unsafe.

Council does much of the work as contractor for Main Roads and can only do the work within limits specified by the Department.

When I made enquiries with Council staff I was advised that for the road between Port Douglas and Mossman:-

*“The current intervention level is set such that when 70% of the grass verge reaches the height of the guide posts, Douglas will slash the verges to a minimum width of 3m from the edge of the road formation. Under the current arrangement, DTMR have agreed to pay for 4 mows per financial year. It is Council’s responsibility as the ‘contractor’ to monitor the grass and mow in accordance with the agreement.”*

This intervention level in my opinion appears to allow a very unsafe situation to arise because 70% of roadside markers/guideposts have to be rendered useless before Council can mow the road edge. It must also make it hard for Council slasher operators when they do mow because the guide posts will be hidden by long grass.

I did raise this matter with Billy Gordon at our recent meeting and now seek a formal follow up.

**CEO’S COMMENT:**

The Captain Cook Highway is controlled by the Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR) and Douglas Shire Council is engaged by DTMR to provide maintenance services in accordance with a yearly Road Maintenance Performance Contract (RMPC). This contract sets out the services Douglas will provide and the required standard of those services.

In the current RMPC contract roadside vegetation within 3.6m of the edge of the roadway exceeding 500mm on a national highway and 700mm in state roads needs to be slashed. Additionally, any vegetation obscuring sight distance and the minimum stopping sight distance is considered a safety issue. Any vegetation obscuring sight lines of accesses or intersection sight distances is considered a safety issue. Any vegetation obscuring sight lines to any signs or guide posts is also considered a safety issue.

The DTMR maintenance priorities are divided into six categories and from high to low these priorities are:

1. Hazard
2. Ordered Works
3. Safety
4. Legislative
5. Preventative; and
6. Appearance / Usability.

Under the contract, Douglas mows the verges along the state roads in accordance with specific intervention levels for road users' safety; and does not mow for aesthetic / appearance reasons. The roads through the Shire are designated 'state roads' and therefore the intervention level is 700mm.

It is Council's responsibility as the 'contractor' to monitor the grass and mow in accordance with the contract. Officers are not aware of any occasions where Council has needed to mow outside the specifications. When Council mows to the specifications, the sight distances around intersection and driveways are managed.

Council officers have observed the current state of grass along the Cook Highway. Officers ravel between Mossman and Port Douglas on a daily basis and have not observed long grass that needs to be managed outside the current specifications. The next mow is expected to occur in the next month or so (depending on rain and growing conditions).

Officers are not aware of any 'dangerous' areas at the moment. Council staff conduct inspections as required under the RMPC contract and the 'defects' are captured and ranked in line with the matrix in the contract. Any 'hazards' or 'safety' defects relating to roadside vegetation would be identified and actioned.

If Council is proposing to mow to a higher standard than the current contract service levels, each additional mow (between Port Douglas and Mossman) will cost Council directly approximately \$3,134 (\$313 per hectare to slash).

The intervention levels have been determined by DTMR and are consistent across the entire state. The opinion of officers is that it will be very difficult for Council to persuade DTMR to increase its intervention levels in the Douglas Shire. Should Council wish to increase the service standard along the Cook Highway, it is likely that Council itself (and therefore ratepayers) would need to meet the additional costs. Council is advised that if it chooses to provide a higher level of service, and is required to fund the same, the additional costs to ratepayers would be ongoing.