

ORDINARY MEETING 16 JUNE 2015	6.4
--	------------

NOTICE OF MOTION – CR MELCHERT – RATES BASED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO MOSSMAN BOTANIC GARDENS FOR 2015/16.

NOTICE OF MOTION

I hereby give Notice of my intention to move the following motion at Council's Ordinary Meeting to be held on Tuesday 16 June 2015:-

“that Council resolve to provide Rates based Financial assistance to the Mossman Botanic Gardens Inc for the 2015/2016 Financial Year for its property situated at Front Street Mossman on the basis that Council provide a 100% remission from Rates and Charges attaching to the property. The assistance arrangement to be reviewed annually.”

BACKGROUND

Mossman Botanic Gardens Inc has, with the assistance of Federal Member Mr Warren Entsch, been able to secure Federal funding to acquire land for the Mossman Botanic Garden. It is likely further Federal funding will be provided to assist in the development of the Garden in the future. In my opinion, especially given the hard work put in by Warren Entsch to get funding for both the Botanic Garden and the Nursing Home, Council should show good faith by adding its weight to the financial support for the project at this early stage of its development. Historically the major Botanic Gardens of the world have taken generations to fully develop and have started with single idea being promoted by representatives of the Community. Our garden is off the ground and in my view Council through the proposed Rate and Charges remission can in a small way help the project on its way to success.

CEO'S COMMENT:

An application for rates based financial assistance has previously been received, this financial year, from the Mossman Botanic Garden Association (MBGA). From the information supplied and following discussions with a representative from the MBGA, this application was denied as it did not fulfil the criteria of the current Rates Based Financial Assistance General Policy.

During the 2015/16 Annual Budget deliberations, the Rates Based Financial Assistance General Policy was discussed with Councillors and officers have been requested to review the policy and present it to Council for re-adoption at its Annual Budget Meeting. One of the officer's recommendations to Council will be to remove the non-compliance status of vacant land.

Whilst that will remove one impediment to the MBGA to receive rates based financial assistance, during the discussions held with the MBGA representative it was stated that they were negotiating lease and/or contractual conditions with the cane farmer growing cane on their property. It has also been confirmed with Mackay Sugar that there is a cane assignment allocated to the land owned by MBGA.

Therefore the situation of a not-for-profit organisation having a contractual arrangement, either formally or informally, with a third party that is deriving income from the land would remain outside the guidelines for rates based financial assistance. This would also set a precedent of inequity that rates based financial assistance be provided to a not-for-profit organisation when the land is utilised for an inconsistent and commercial purpose, in this case cane farming and not botanical gardens.