

7.11. DAINTREE RIVER FERRY UPDATE OCTOBER 2025

REPORT AUTHOR	Contract Manager
MANAGER	Manager Infrastructure Planning and Delivery
DEPARTMENT	Infrastructure and Recovery

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the Daintree River Ferry financial information and tender progress for October 2025.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A monthly progress report is supplied to provide Councillors with financial details and tender progress of the Daintree River Ferry.

BACKGROUND

On 8 October 2024, Council resolved to replace the Daintree River Ferry, outsource ownership and operation to a contractor and release a tender to the market for a contractor to design, construct, deliver and operate the ferry service.

On 10 December 2024, a Notice of Motion was carried that at monthly Ordinary Council Meetings, Councillors are provided with monthly financial details relating to the Daintree River Ferry and progress on the Expressions of Interest (request for tender) to supply and operate the ferry.

COMMENTS

Financial Information

The graphs attached represent the financial performance and operational statistics of the Daintree River Ferry Operations for the current financial year. It should be noted that this is not a comprehensive assessment of the financial performance as Council's corporate and administrative costs that support the ferry operation have not been included, these costs include but are not limited to: ticket and ferry card sales administration, contract invoicing, accounts payable and receivable, budgeting and financial reporting, payroll and human resources, auditing, issues, complaints, enquiries, Council staff support, and administrative costs and overheads.

Tender Progress

1. Landside Infrastructure

The 70% stage civil design drawings have been issued to Council for review. Internal stakeholders across Council are currently reviewing the drawings. In addition, Council officers met with electrical engineers onsite to clarify the electrical and communications scope of work.

2. New Ferry

Australian maritime engineering company Birdon has signed a 20-year contract with Council to design, construct, operate and maintain a new four-lane ferry for the Daintree River crossing. In addition, Council executives and officers met with key representatives from Birdon to discuss the new contract and transition planning.

PROPOSAL

That Council receives and notes the Daintree River Ferry financial information and tender progress for October 2025.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Reporting on Daintree River Ferry does not have any material resource impact on the delivery of the service.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Monthly reporting keeps Council informed of the progress in relation to the Daintree River Ferry operation and allows for timely corrective action if required.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic: Monitoring the progress of the replacement of the Daintree River Ferry ensures the project remains on track and allows for timely corrective action if required.

Environmental: Nil

Social: Nil

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

Corporate Plan 2025-2030 Initiatives:

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.*

Theme 5 - Robust Governance and Efficient Service Delivery

Strong governance and financial management are the foundations of the way in which Council will conduct its business and implement the initiatives of the Corporate Plan.

Goal 3 - *We will make sound financial decisions by ensuring robust strategic planning, financial management and reporting.*

Operational Plan 2025-2026 Actions:

Daintree Ferry – Replacement – Progress the design and approvals for a new Daintree Ferry.

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:

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.
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CONSULTATION

Internal:	Operations and Maintenance Team
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External:	Nil
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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

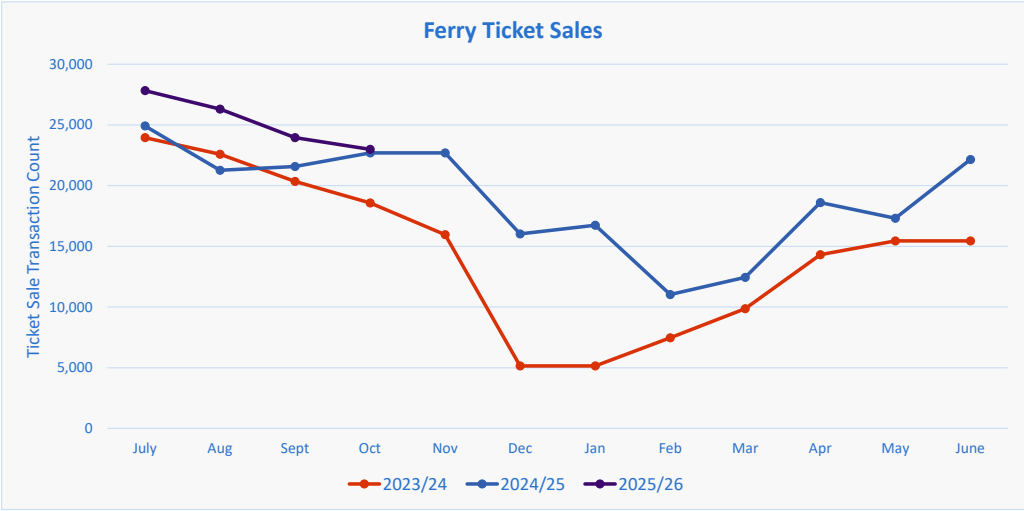
Nil

ATTACHMENTS

1. Daintree Ferry Monthly Report - Operations Statistics Oct 2025 [7.11.1 - 2 pages]

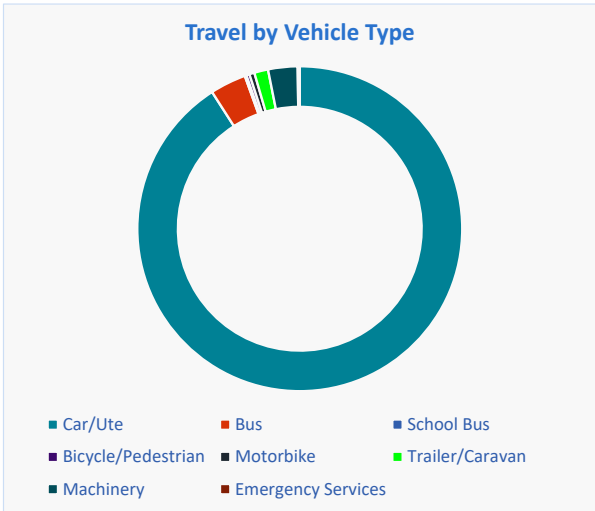
Daintree Ferry Monthly Report
October 2025

OPERATING STATISTICS



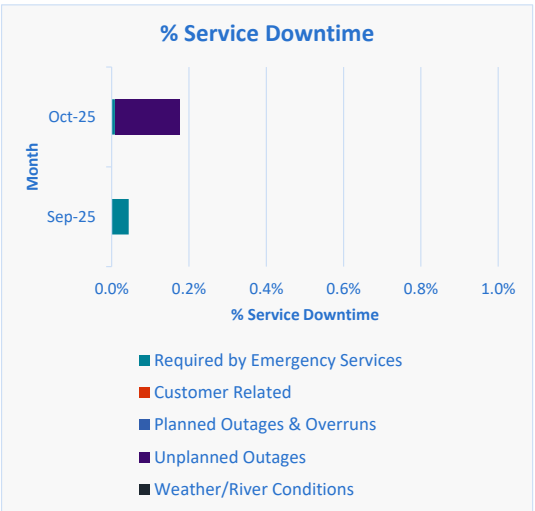
The line chart shows the number of ferry ticket sales purchased in a given month compared over the last three (3) financial years. It includes actual travel and pre-purchase tickets for future months. As expected, there are less ticket sales during the wet season, particularly between December and March. Ticket sale numbers were notably significantly lower in December 2023 to February 2024, following Tropical Cyclone Jasper. More recent ticket sale numbers in October 2025 are up 1.27% compared to the previous year.

	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
2023/24	23,949	22,586	20,341	18,566	15,959	5,146	5,146	7,465	9,862	14,312	15,440	15,440
2024/25	24,915	21,267	21,572	22,698	22,698	16,021	16,737	11,030	12,436	18,602	17,307	22,148
2025/26	27,824	26,298	23,957	22,987								



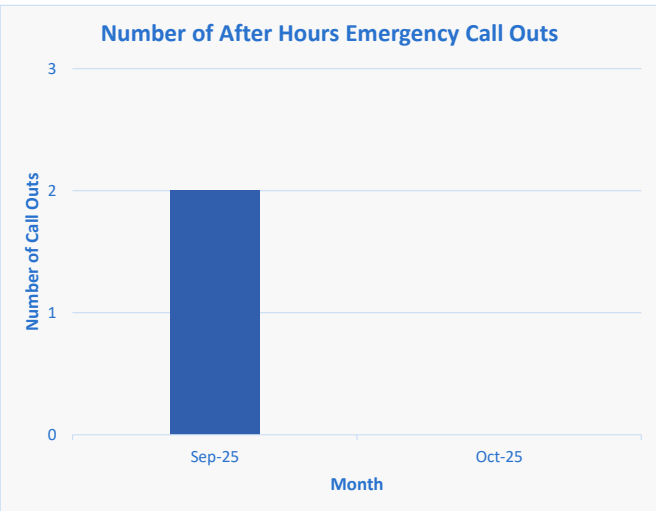
The pie chart shows the breakdown of vehicle types which used the Daintree Ferry in October 2025. Car and ute travel makes up the majority of travel (90.9%), followed by buses (3.6%) and machinery (2.9%).

Travel by Vehicle Type	Oct-25
Car/Ute	90.9%
Bus	3.6%
School Bus	0.2%
Bicycle/Pedestrian	0.3%
Motorbike	0.5%
Trailer/Caravan	1.4%
Machinery	2.9%
Emergency Services	0.2%
	100.0%



The Daintree Ferry's operational hours are 19 hours per day, 365 days a year. On occasion there are instances where the ferry service experiences a downtime. In October 2025, the ferry was out of service two (2) times for a total of 62 minutes. This delays were due to waiting for an ambulance (3 mins) and a hydraulic related issue requiring repair (59 mins).

% Service Downtime	Sep-25	Oct-25
Required by Emergency Services	0.04%	0.01%
Customer Related	0.00%	0.00%
Planned Outages & Overruns	0.00%	0.00%
Unplanned Outages	0.00%	0.17%
Weather/River Conditions	0.00%	0.00%
	0.04%	0.18%

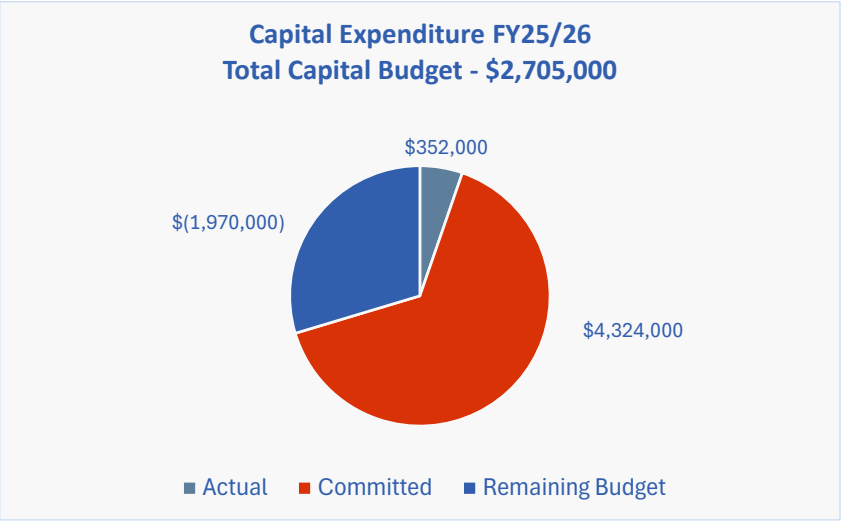


In addition to operating 19 hours per day, the Daintree Ferry operates an on-call service for emergency services between midnight and 5am. In October 2025 there were no emergency services requiring passage out-of-hours.

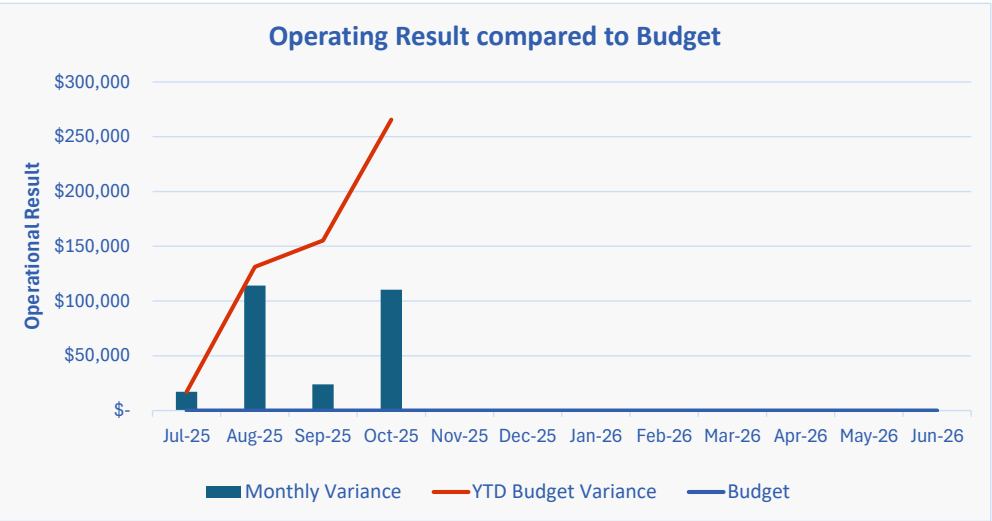
Number of After Hours Emergency Call Outs	Sep-25	Oct-25
After Hours Emergency Call Outs	2	0

Daintree Ferry Monthly Report
October 2025

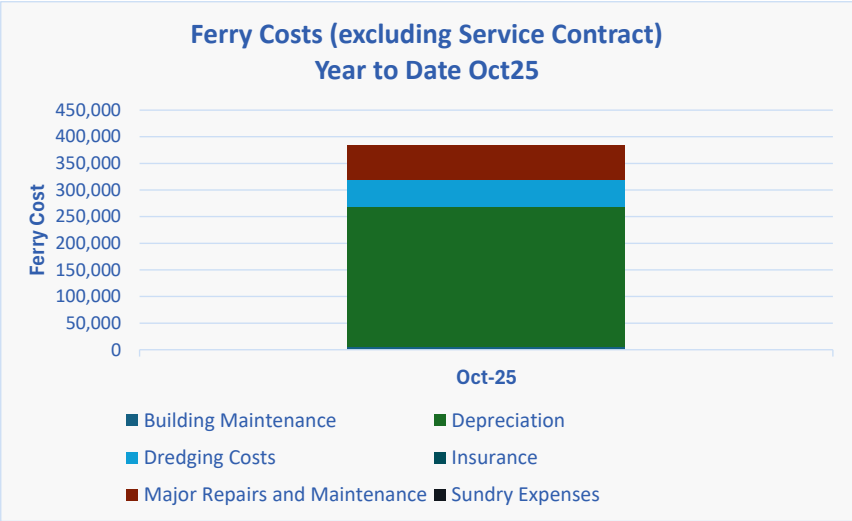
OPERATING STATISTICS - PART B



The pie chart shows the capital commitment, actual spend and remaining budget for financial year 2025/26. The planned budget for the year was \$2.705 million, however Council has secured additional funding for the new landside infrastructure which has significantly increased the project budget to \$4.6 million, this will be brought back to Council at the Budget Review.



The chart shows an operating surplus for July to October 2025 compared to the budget. This is due to extra income from ticket sales and less maintenance costs than expected.



The stacked bar chart shows the operational spend by type, excluding the service contract. In October 2025, depreciation made up the largest proportion, followed by major repairs/maintenance and dredging expenditure.