

7.17. DAINTREE RIVER FERRY UPDATE AUGUST 2025

REPORT AUTHOR	Contract Manager
MANAGER	Chief Engineer TC Jasper Infrastructure and Recovery
DEPARTMENT	Infrastructure and Recovery

RECOMMENDATION

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

Project Progress

Two key projects are underway which are essential to maintaining access across the Daintree River for the community:

1. Landside Infrastructure

In August 2025, the two (2) ferry pylons were inspected by specialist marine contractors for structural integrity. In addition, minor works on the ferry pylons were conducted, this included the installation of new ladders and operational platforms. This project is on schedule.

2. New Ferry

The request for tender (RFT) closed on 9 April 2025 and awarded to Birdon Pty Ltd at the 12 August 2025 Council Meeting. Final contract negotiations are occurring with signing expected shortly. At this stage there are no risks to this process which would result in delays.

PROPOSAL

That Council receives and notes the Daintree River Ferry financial information and tender progress for August 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 2019-2024 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 2024-2025 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:

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.

CONSULTATION

Internal: Leadership Team, Council Workshop - 23 September 2025

External: Nil

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

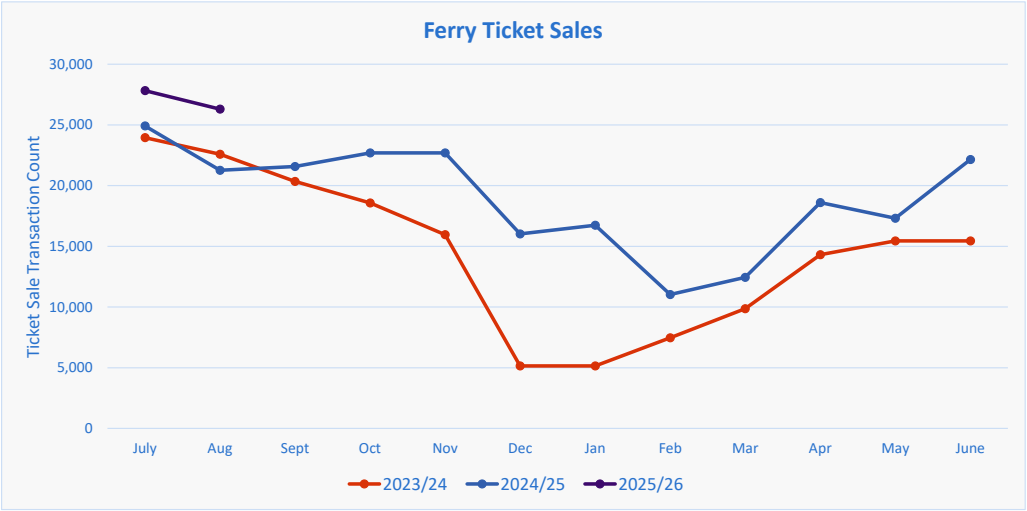
Nil

ATTACHMENTS

1. Daintree Ferry Monthly Report - Operations Statistics Aug 2025 [7.17.1 - 2 pages]

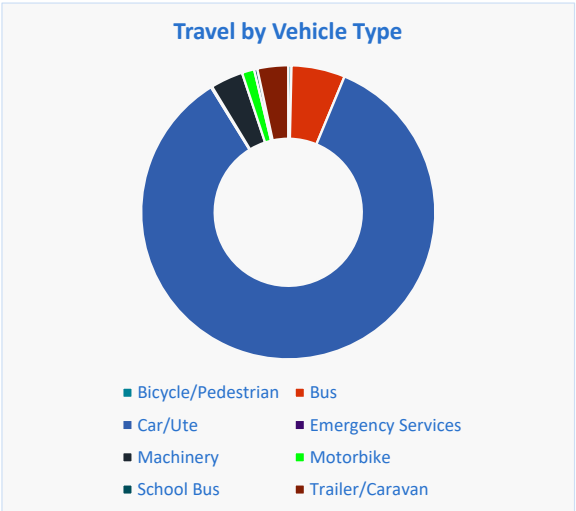
Daintree Ferry Monthly Report
August 2025

OPERATING STATISTICS



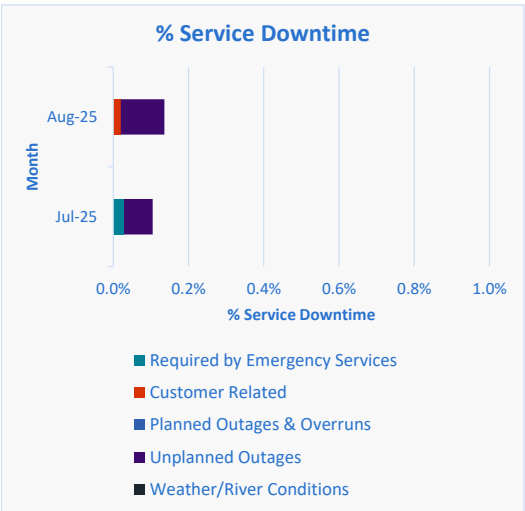
The line chart shows the number of ferry ticket sales purchased in a given month compared over the last three (3) financial years. As expected, there are less ticket sales during the wet season, particularly between December and March. Ticket sale numbers were notably significantly lower in December 2023 to February 2024, following Tropical Cyclone Jasper. More recent ticket sale numbers in August 2025 are up 23% compared to the previous year, an encouraging trend.

	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										



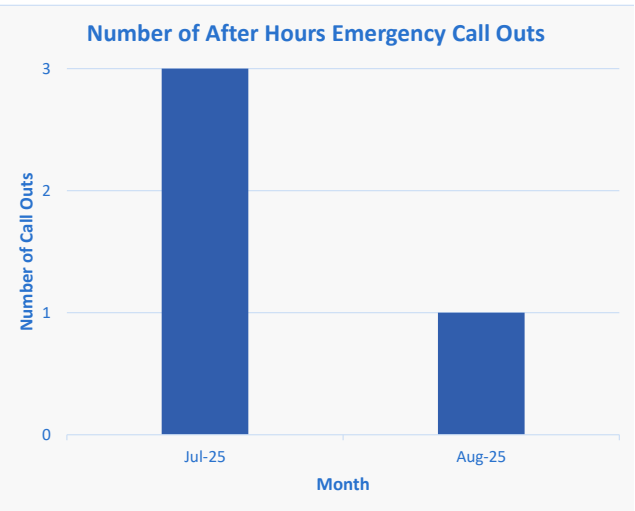
The pie chart shows the breakdown of vehicle types which use the Daintree Ferry. Car and ute travel makes up the majority of travel (85%), followed by buses (6%) and machinery (4%).

Travel by Vehicle Type	Aug-25	%
Bicycle/Pedestrian	85	0.4%
Bus	1403	5.9%
Car/Ute	20,206	84.9%
Emergency Services	31	0.1%
Machinery	852	3.6%
Motorbike	323	1.4%
School Bus	83	0.3%
Trailer/Caravan	805	3.4%
	23,788	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 August 2025, the ferry was out of service four (4) times for a total of 44 minutes. This was due to unplanned outages relating to adjusting and changing out minor components; and one (1) passenger car break down on the ferry.

% Service Downtime	Jul-25	Aug-25
Required by Emergency Services	0.03%	0.00%
Customer Related	0.00%	0.02%
Planned Outages & Overruns	0.00%	0.00%
Unplanned Outages	0.08%	0.12%
Weather/River Conditions	0.00%	0.00%

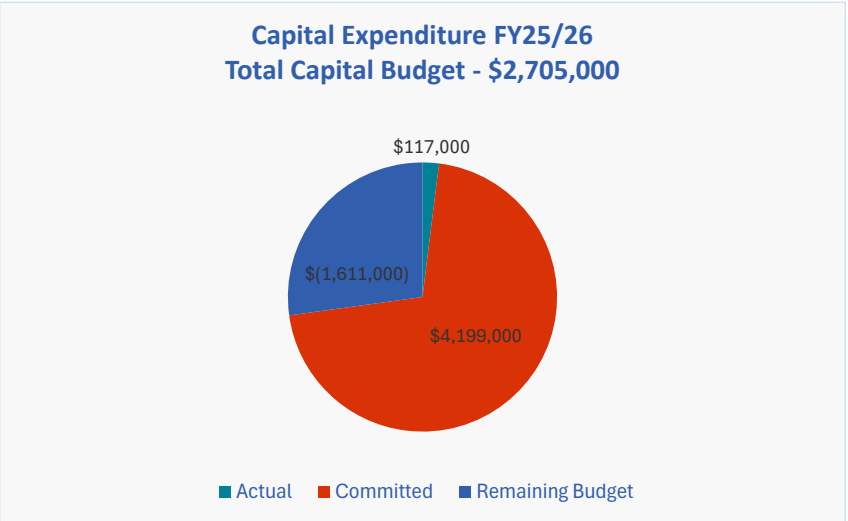


In addition to operating 19 hours per day, the Daintree Ferry operates an on-call service for emergency services between midnight and 5am. In August 2025, one (1) ambulance required passage out-of-hours.

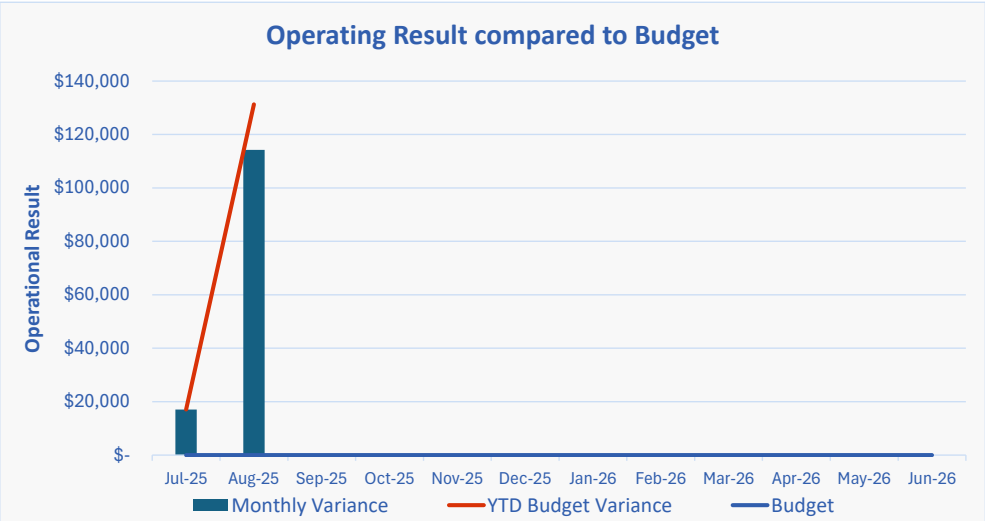
Number of After Hours Emergency Call Outs	Jul-25	Aug-25
After Hours Emergency Call Outs	3	1

Daintree Ferry Monthly Report
August 2025

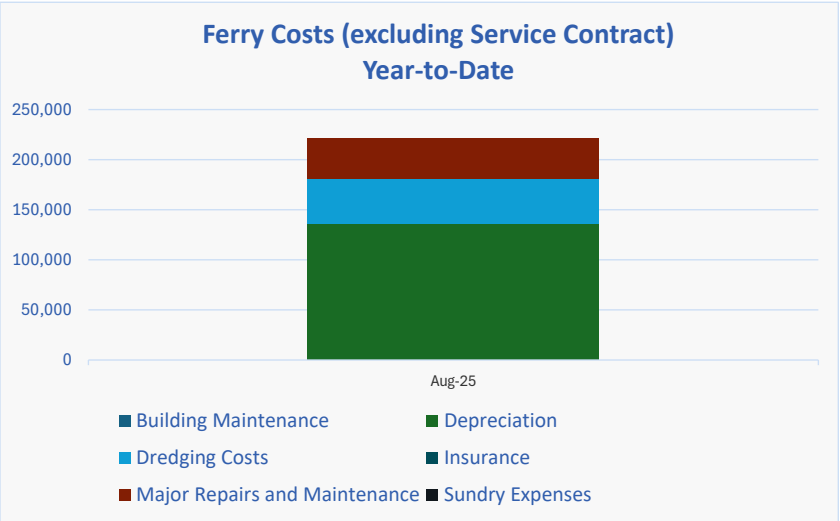
OPERATING STATISTICS - PART B



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 \$4.3 million, this will be brought back to Council at the Budget Review.



The chart shows an operating surplus for August 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 July and August 2025, depreciation made up the largest proportion, followed by dredging and major repairs/maintenance expenditure.