

8.1. PORT DOUGLAS MARINA SEWAGE PUMP-OUT FACILITY

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DEPARTMENT Corporate Services

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. receives the petition;**
 - 2. notes the advocacy actions Council has undertaken to date; and**
 - 3. continues with an advocacy role on this matter into the future.**
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A petition has been received calling upon Council to construct a sewage pump-out facility at the Port Douglas Marina so that tourism vessels do not have to discharge their sewage directly into the marine ecosystem.

The principal petitioner is Bonnie Nesbitt and is an on-line petition (https://www.change.org/p/julia-leu-construct-and-implement-sewage-pump-out-facility-at-the-port-douglas-marina?recruiter=684804740&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=copylink&utm_campaign=share_petition) At the time of producing this report, there were 508 petitioners.

In accordance with clause 8.3 of the Standing Orders for Council Meetings, this petition is presented to Council.

COMMENT

This is a complex matter which is currently beyond the control of Council alone to resolve.

Currently the Port Douglas Waste Water Treatment Plant cannot directly accept high saline content effluent. A dedicated treatment plant would be required as well as significant infrastructure upgrades to provide pump out facilities and transfer piping to a treatment plant.

Significant operational and maintenance budgets would be required and the appropriate permits from environmental authorities to treat and discharge the effluent and final products would need to be obtained. Land for the location of treatment and pump out facilities and possibly dredging may also be required.

Of crucial importance is that the relevant legislation (currently the Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act 1995) would need to be changed to require vessels operating in the waters off Port Douglas to be required to either treat on board sewage to a standard or utilise pump out facilities.

This would need to be phased in to allow operators to bring existing equipment up to the necessary standard to allow pump out. Without the legislative backing, financial assistance to operators for upgrades and the investment in treatment and pump out infrastructure then time and cost implications mean the practice will continue.

Government needs to provide evidence that the practice of dumping sewage at sea is environmentally sustainable or provide the necessary funding and legislation to make pump out and treatment onshore viable.

Council has in the past and will continue in the future, to advocate to the State government and other government agencies to seek a solution to this matter. Following are weblinks to previous submissions which include reference to the issue of vessels which discharge their sewage directly into the marine ecosystem.

- Enhancing Great Barrier Reef Regulations Submission to the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection
https://douglas.qld.gov.au/download/council_meetings/meeting_agendas/5.7-Enhancing-Great-Barrier-Reef-Regulations-Submission-to-EHP.pdf
- Reef 2050 Plan Submission to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
https://douglas.qld.gov.au/download/council_meetings/meeting_agendas/5.8-Reef-2050-Plan-Submission-to-GBRMPA.pdf
- Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan 2017-2022 to the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection
https://douglas.qld.gov.au/download/council_meetings/meeting_agendas/5.5-Reef-2050-Water-Quality-Improvement-Plan-Submission-to-EHP.pdf

PROPOSAL

In accordance with Council's Standing Orders for Council Meetings, it is proposed that Council receive the petition and Notes the advocacy actions Council has undertaken to date.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial or resource implications associated with receiving this petition and for Council to continue with an advocacy role on this matter into the future.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

As a local government authority Council must be involved wherever possible to facilitate change to better protect the environment in which we live.

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

Corporate Plan 2014-2019 Initiatives:

Theme 3 - Improve Environmental Performance

3.1.6 - Pursue best practice management outcomes for waste management facilities.

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)

CONSULTATION

Internal: Sustainable Communities

External: Nil

ATTACHMENTS

Nil