

Boonooroo Community Briefing



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Dear Residents,

Thank you for attending the third of the Fraser Coast Regional Council Community Briefings. These are being held across the region to hear your concerns and keep you up-to-date with what is happening within Council and particularly your area.

We decided very quickly after the March 15 election last year that one of our main priorities as an amalgamated Council was to create a two-way dialogue with residents.

We live in a large region so it is important we get out and about to the many different communities to hear your ideas and concerns to consider when making plans for your area.

Many issues and questions were raised at the Boonooroo briefing. Below are answers to the questions.

The Councillors and staff who attended the briefing feel that it was very successful and I would like to thank everyone who attended.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Kruger".

Councillor Mick Kruger
Mayor
Fraser Coast Regional Council

1. Q: Poona Progress Association: In regard to the \$42,000 mentioned in the Mayor's welcome speech why has Poona missed out again?

A: Council has received \$1.08 million from the Federal Government as part of an \$800 million stimulus package to councils to keep the economy ticking along.

The projects had to be new projects. The Federal Government has approved the projects put forward by Council which include:

- \$40,000 for a shelter shed with two barbecues and tables at Maaroom;
- \$55,000 for informal walkways and cycle ways and BMX track at Boonooroo;
- \$5,000 for a barbecue shelter and barbecue at Tinnanbar;
- \$10,000 towards play equipment for the Tinnanbar foreshore and Tiaro Memorial Park.

2. Q: The popularity of boating and fishing is increasing. Can facilities be improved to keep pace with demand, especially car parks at boat ramps?

A: The demand for facilities at boat ramps is constantly monitored in conjunction with Queensland Transport. Queensland Transport is responsible for building and maintaining the ramps while the Council is responsible for building and maintaining the on-land facilities. This year the Council spent \$400,000 on improvements to the Gatakers Bay ramp. Sunfish also gained a \$100,000 Commonwealth Recreational Fishing Community Grant to put towards the Gatakers Bay facilities such as two fish cleaning stations and turtle-friendly lighting. Queensland Transport spent \$350,000 building the ramp.

The Council is constantly investigating possible funding sources to provide more boat ramp facilities. Staff from the Council's Open Space and Recreation section are also in discussions with progress associations from the coastal villages about potential improvements to park facilities.

3. Q: What's happening with progressing the Boonooroo Foreshore Management Plan?

A: The plan was developed to show state and federal government funding bodies that the Maryborough City Council was working to a master plan to develop the area. You can't attract funding without a master plan. The plan has been adopted by the Fraser Coast Regional Council to guide future works. It will be progressively implemented as funds become available.

4. Q: Does the Fire Management Plan being developed by the Council support hazard reduction burns? They need to be finished by June.

A: The FCRC Director of External Services and the QFRS Rural Commissioner Warren Edwards are to meet to discuss the implementation of the plan and hazard reduction burns of Council property will be included on the agenda.

5. Q: Is the Boonooroo and Tuan area recreation plan still to be implemented?

A: Yes. The plan was developed by the former Maryborough City Council and has been adopted by the FCRC. Amalgamation has caused a slight slow-down in implementation timeframes. It will be incorporated into a regional strategy that will be progressively implemented as funds become available.

6. Q: Why didn't the FCRC apply for grants to assist with amalgamation?

A: The Fraser Coast Regional Council decided against applying for the State Government's offer of compensation for amalgamation costs. On analysing the criteria and the probable outcome, it was decided that it was unlikely that any compensation would cover the costs of preparing the application. Consulting with other councils reinforced that view.

7. Q: Will the new signs to be developed by Council, point visitors to the coastal communities?

A: The signs will be directional and will be part of a large FCRC initiative to develop maps outlining short drives across the region that will be available from the Visitor Information Centres. The aim is to encourage visitors to stay longer in the area. Once the signs are in place, the Council will consult with the community on the best way to take the process further.

8. Q: Can a sign pointing to Rainbow Beach be placed with the sign pointing to Tin Can Bay on the Cooloola Road turn off? Tourists are missing the turn and heading to Boonooroo.

A: FCRC Director of External Services Ron Smith will contact the Department of Main Roads to request a sign.

9. Q: Residents are frustrated that they receive no response to letters and emails sent to Council staff.

A: The Council receives tens of thousands of letters a month. The Council is developing processes to track letters and email through the Council system. Reports on the amount of correspondence and the time taken to receipt, and answer correspondence are discussed regularly by Directors at management meetings. The Council is developing customer services standards which will include timeframes for answering correspondence. Anyone who continues to have difficulty getting a response from the Council should email the CEO directly.

10. Q: What can be done to overcome flooding in older developments closer to the foreshore caused by run off from development in new subdivisions?

A: The Mayor has spoken to officers and asked them to ensure developers carry out remedial works as directed.

11. Q: Does Council have a drainage strategy for the coastal communities. This is a coastal wetland yet the answer for the developers is to fill. Development approvals should not be granted unless new development can show it will not cause downstream flooding. We need a comprehensive drainage plan before any more development comes in.

A: The Council has not developed a drainage strategy for each of the coastal communities. The communities are on very flat ground not far above high tide level so drainage issues are examined case by case.

12. Q: Can the open stormwater drains be replaced with pipes? Water is ponding in the drains and stagnating.

A: Ideas on drainage have changed from directing stormwater into underground pipes and channelling it out to sea. The state government will no longer allow ocean outfalls unless the Council can guarantee the quality of the water reaching the ocean. Grassed drains are now preferred to pipes. This allows the stormwater to be filtered to remove sediments and nutrients before it reaches the ocean. The Council will monitor drains to ensure that they are not overgrown and weed infested.

13. Q: A change in size (development intensity) of a development at Poona is endangering the coastal wetland. What is Council going to do to ensure existing residents are not affected by drainage from the development and to protect the wetlands?

A: The Development Application is before the Council and a decision has not yet been made.

14. Q: What strategies will Council use to offset predicted falls in revenue so services to coastal communities will not fall? Will rates be increased, assets sold or service levels dropped?

A: The Council is about to address these issues as it starts formulating the 2009/10 budget. There will be an increase in rates to cover increases in costs, however to lessen the quantum of any proposed rate rise, Management has been requested to identify a 2.50% to 3% saving from each Directorate's operational budget by reviewing individual programs and service areas.

15. Q: A damaged picnic table seat at Tuan was taken away by council staff after it was pointed out by residents several weeks ago. When will the seat be replaced?

A: Council has investigated the site since the Community briefing and determined that some of the park picnic tables were beyond repair. New benches will be bought to replace those beyond repair and repairs will be made to the others.

16. Q: When Council works crews mow verges at Poona, grass clippings are left strewn across the road. Can they be cleaned off the road?

A: Cleaning grass clippings off roads when the verges are mown would involve either a sweeper truck or considerable manual work – either system incurring considerable expense if taken over the whole region. In our climate the clippings usually dry up quickly and are blown away by the breeze.

17. Q: What is the Council going to do about the coastal erosion on properties at Tuan? Remedial work carried out by the Council was inadequate and was washed away.

A: FCRC has formally applied to DLGS&R in February 2009, for \$50,000 funding to develop a Shoreline Erosion Management Plan (SEMP) for the '*key erosion sites of former Maryborough and Tiaro Councils*' in accordance with EPA guidelines. FCRC has committed a matching \$50,000 within the FY 2010/2011 Capital Works budget to develop this SEMP.

1. FCRC considered an application to DLGS&R in February 2009, for \$30,000 funding to develop a Shoreline Erosion Management Plan (SEMP) for the '*undeveloped and residual sites of the Fraser Coast Region*' in accordance with EPA guidelines. Scope will be all open ocean coastline not included in previous SEMP's. However, FCRC has postponed this application and the associated commitment of matching funding until the next round of SEMP funding (expected in February 2010).
2. Historical studies/reports will be made available to consultants, and formal community consultation will be undertaken as part of this formal SEMP process.
3. FCRC has committed to undertake foreshore biodiversity assessments across the region in the 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 financial years to improve foreshore management planning and prioritise remediation and restoration activities.
4. To support SEMP development, FCRC has committed to extend formal beach profile surveying (presently undertaken in Hervey Bay), to former Maryborough and Tiaro council areas.
5. Trees on beach and adjacent to erosion scarp are to be monitored for risk to public, and remedial action is to be taken when level of risk is unacceptable.

6. No further significant coastal protection works to be progressed until a formal SEMP strategy has been developed for Tuan (Estimated Timeframe: 24-36 months; see 2 above). FCRC and residents may continue to undertake '*emergency works*' when life or property is under immediate threat of erosion. However, it should be noted that formal approval will retrospectively need to be gained from EPA and other relevant agencies for all '*emergency works*' undertaken, and that these works can only be undertaken on land on which authority exists.

18. Q: If the Council's income falls by \$10 million what will the Council do to offset that?

A: If the Council's revenue was to fall by \$10 million (e.g. reduction in development fees or grants) the Council would need to undertake a review of the services and/or levels of service that it provides to offset the reduction in revenue. The other alternative is to look to increasing revenue from other services.

As part of the development of the 2009/10 budget the Executive have looked at reducing operating expenditure through improved processes and work procedures. Whilst this will not equate to \$10 million it will help to alleviate some potential increases in rates.

The only other sources of revenue comes from business activities of Council and this may be looked at in future to try and bring additional funds into Council.

19. Q: Why do residents have to keep ringing Council about overgrown allotments? Why can't parks staff note overgrown allotments as they travel around the area?

A: It is the responsibility of the landowner to ensure that their block is maintained to an acceptable level. Council officers either react to complaints and inspect the general area for compliance or undertake general inspections of the area. The blocks need to be overgrown before Council can initiate action against landowners. We encourage local residents and our own staff to tell us when problems occur so that compliance action can start.

20. Q: Poona residents are unhappy with responses to requests for parkland to be mown in time for the Easter Fishing competition. The area was weed-free at Christmas but has been allowed to deteriorate. Can the area be maintained more regularly?

21. Q: Can maintenance on roundabouts in new subdivisions be improved? They have become weed infested and the little fences need cleaning.

22. Q: Trimmings were recently left on the roadside after trees were trimmed and council staff mowed around the trimmings. It was left to Ergon staff to pick up the trimmings and mulch them. What is the Council going to do about the poor standard of maintenance work?

A to Q20, Q21 and Q22: Council has a large area of parks to maintain across the region within financial constraints whilst balancing service levels. The existing operational budget for parks maintenance is not sufficient to accommodate the suggested increase in service standards.

23. Q: Why was machinery sold off and ground staff sacked from smaller Councils during amalgamation? More outdoor staff are needed not more indoor staff.

A: Staff were not sacked during the amalgamation process. Under amalgamation legislation our staff have job security until March 2011. About 95 staff have left since amalgamation which is on a par with normal staff turnover for a business with 750 employees. Staff have been recruited to fill vacant positions.

Machinery was not sold off, rather it was rationalised and replaced with newer equipment. Council is continuing to review service levels across the region to ensure consistency where possible however this is in the context of existing financial and budgetary constraints.

24. Q: The loss of wards has disadvantaged smaller communities because they no longer know which councillor to contact if they have a problem. Can Councillors be assigned a small community?

A: Each Councillor chairs a Portfolio. Residents have access to the Mayor and all Councillors. We find the undivided system works better than the Ward System as it gives Councillors a broader appreciation of all areas across the Fraser Coast.

25. Q: The dump at Poona was open seven days a week before amalgamation and is now open four days a week. What is its long term future?

A: The dump will not be closed. The Council is working to meet new stricter EPA licence requirements. The Council had two options to meet the significant cost increases of those requirements: close the dump or decrease opening hours. The Council chose to keep the service by cutting opening hours. Fees have increased 10 times this year and the council has to furnish reports and undergo regular EPA inspections. Council is now trying to find a suitable location at Poona for residents to deposit green waste rather than have to take it to Maryborough for disposal. A final decision will depend on the Council's ability to find a site that can be managed to EPA requirements.

26. Q: How much do the seaside communities pay in rates and what do they receive for it?

A: Council plans to undertake an analysis of the cost of servicing a residential block in various locations across the region including rural, coastal and urban areas compared to the rate revenue generated. Council has commenced the process of implementing a single rating structure for the Fraser Coast to ensure that the rate burden is distributed equitable across all ratepayers. However there are some services which all ratepayers contribute too albeit they may not be within that community but service the entire region eg: regional libraries, road networks, community services etc.

27. Q: Why should the residents outside Hervey Bay pay for the refurbishment of the Urangan Pier?

A: The pier restoration was part of the former Hervey Bay City Council's capital works program funded by ratepayers in Hervey Bay. All of the former local government area projects previously identified and funded in capital works programs were rolled over into the Fraser Coast Capital Works Program for 2008/09.

The Pier is an icon in the region for all Fraser Coast residents to use and enjoy. It is also an icon that attracts tourists to the region.

28. Q: In response to Cyclone Hamish, residents want to know if there are evacuation centres or shelters in the coastal communities that can be used in an emergency.

A: The Council and Emergency Management Queensland are working through issues generated by Cyclone Hamish. The Council adopted its Counter Disaster Plans only two weeks before Hamish appeared. It is now using the experience gained during the cyclone to ensure there are no gaps in the plans: that includes fine tuning an evacuation plan. The Council realises that many of the communities (large and small) have only one access road so there is a need to get information to residents as quickly as possible if an evacuation is necessary.

The Council is developing communications systems using the rural fire brigade, progress associations and the VMR to disperse information through the communities.

29. Q: Can a bus service be started to service the coastal communities?

A: The Council is waiting for a response from the companies that provide bus services to the Fraser Coast on the outcome of tenders for smaller, more targeted bus services. It will then be able to assess if a service to the coastal communities can be investigated.

30. Q: Who owns the playground in Poona near the caravan park? It is in poor condition and an eyesore.

A: A meeting was held in early 2009 with representatives of the Poona Progress Association, Cr Barb Hovard and Council officers regarding a range of maintenance issues at the Poona foreshore. Council officers wanted to fix the issues identified however the representatives of the Poona Progress Association asked Council not to proceed as they wanted Council to spend available funds on a concept plan and preliminary costs for car and trailer parking, a jetty and an expanded ramp. A report to Council is being prepared regarding this matter.

31. Q: What is the Council going to do with the house it bought in Davies Road?

A: The Council is planning to remove the house and raise the level of the land.