

Community Briefing at Maryborough City Hall 27 July 2010

Q 1:

Before 2008 Maryborough City Council received a Roads to Recovery grant to seal Old Coach Road. A participant at the briefing said that the Maryborough City Council said it would seal the road in 2008 but so far only 400 metres have been sealed. Where has the money gone? The participant said he was told by a Fraser Coast Regional Council staff member that the money had been re-allocated. The road is quite busy and only single lane in parts because of drains either side, so it is in need of work.

It was also suggested that Maryborough City Council received money from two developments in Old Coach Road that should have gone towards road upgrades. Where does Old Coach Road sit in the 5 to 10-year capital works program?

A:

A 550-metre section of the road was sealed in 2009. That project was interrupted when more than a metre of flood water rushed over the road in April storms causing extensive damage to the gravel pavement. The \$140,000 Roads to Recovery funding was expended on the project.

Q 2:

The Council has spent \$1 million to build the pontoons on the Mary River at Maryborough and is now spending \$200 to \$300 a week to moor the damaged pontoon at the marina. The pontoon is the wrong design for the river location. What is the Council doing with the pontoons and what is it going to do to rectify the situation?

A:

The damaged pontoon is the subject of an insurance claim. The insurance company has given Council permission to remove it from the river as it continues to investigate the Council's claim for damages.

Q 3:

The timber seats installed during the Kent Street beautification project will not last. They will soon deteriorate in the hot sun and splinter, requiring on-going maintenance. Why didn't the Council use extruded aluminium seating instead?

A:

The seats utilised were part of the original design pallet for the Maryborough CBD. The design reflects a mix of materials that are both long lasting and durable. The use of timber was seen as a design link with both the historic timber buildings of the area and the strong historical association between the development of the City and the timber industry. Timber seats are utilised across the whole of the Fraser Coast. Purchase costs, durability, costs of parts, maintenance costs, aesthetics and ergonomics have all been considered and it was concluded that the timber offered the best outcome. Provided annual maintenance is completed, the hard wood is extremely durable and components easily replaceable.

Q 4:

The bird droppings around town are offensive. When they get wet they stink. We have a nice wide footpath in the Zante Street/Queen Street area but pedestrians are choosing to walk on the road rather than the footpath to avoid the droppings. Can the Council do something about it?

A:

Council staff in Maryborough sweep footpaths in the CBD regularly to ensure that the environment is clean and litter free for residents and visitors. The Council is aware that from time to time birds will roost in groups in trees around the city. Normally rain will wash the bird droppings away or into the turf as is the case in the Zante Street/Queen Street area. However if there is a prolonged dry spell the droppings might build up and become offensive. If residents consider the build-up a health risk, they can ring the Council's Customer Service Centre on 1300 794 929 and lodge a request for staff to investigate.

Q 5:

Why is the Council charging ratepayers a \$25 Environment Levy? You say you are spending it on beaches and coastline but we don't have any beaches in Maryborough. You should be looking at roads, rubbish, sewerage and water.

A:

The Environmental Levy had grown to reflect the wider range of environmental activities and issues tackled by Council.

The Council is aware of a number of environmental issues facing the region from coastline erosion to water quality management in hinterland creeks and rivers, and of community expectations to preserve and protect our unique natural environment.

The Environmental Levy has been expanded to provide critical funding to address a broader range of environmental issues facing the Fraser Coast including:

- Protecting environmentally significant land through acquisition;
- Acquisition, restoration and maintenance of land contiguous to environmentally significant land (i.e. riparian/fauna movement corridors);
- Rehabilitation, enhancement and maintenance of land acquired including the development of management plans and implementation of rehabilitation, enhancement and operational maintenance programs; and
- Community and environmental activities that directly relate to the protection, enhancement, management and monitoring of the natural environment in addition to mitigation, adaptation, education, investigation and implementation of climate change response initiatives.

Community and environmental activities include:

- Environmental protection and natural resource management initiatives;
- Foreshore restoration;
- Coastline and erosion management;
- Climate change initiatives;
- Terrestrial vegetation restoration and regeneration;
- Rehabilitation works of endangered ecological communities;
- Ecological restoration strategy and implementation;
- Support for Community Environment Program;
- Water quality monitoring and waterway management; and
- Community education programs on sustainability.

While additional purchases of remnant bushland have not been identified at this stage, the policy does not prevent the levy being used for this purpose should priorities change or key land be identified.

In respect to land purchases; Council collected an estimated \$3.46 million under the previous Hervey Bay City Council scheme, of which \$696,000 remains in reserves. All of the money will be used to buy environmentally significant land.

The Council has also collected \$950,000 since amalgamation which will also be used to buy and manage/maintain environmentally significant land within the region.

Buying land is not the only method the Council is using to protect environmentally significant land.

The Council is developing a regional planning scheme and land use strategy which will provide a planning framework for the protection of significant natural areas.

The Council acknowledges and appreciates the commitment and contribution made by the Environmental Advisory Committee and the original proponents of the levy and looks forward to proactively working with all key stakeholders in conserving and protecting our natural environment.

Q 6:

Why has the council spent so much money on the water park in Hervey Bay when it is hardly used? Briefing participant said he had been down to Hervey Bay four times in the last four weeks and there was never anyone there.

A:

WetSide was built with a \$4.95m Q150 grant received from the State Government to celebrate the state's 150th anniversary. Fraser Coast Regional Council contributed an amenities block and carparking while Wide Bay Water Corporation contributed the remaining funds.

The number of families enjoying WetSide exceeded expectations during its first summer of operations with between 2000 and 3000 people attending daily. As expected use of WetSide has dropped off during the colder months and Wide Bay Water, which operates WetSide, has taken the opportunity at low use times to carry out maintenance.

Operating and maintenance costs for WetSide are between \$350,000 and \$400,000 a year.

These costs are reduced through the revenue generated from the BoardRider and cafe and are the income will soon to be increased thanks to the launch of Light Shows and the refurbished restaurant in October.

Q 7:

We would like to see divisions reinstated so that each area has representation.

A:

Prior to amalgamation each of the local governments considered the issue of divisions. With the way that the provisions of the *Local Government Act* are at present, there is a requirement for each division to have an equal number of voters. To achieve this with the current number of Councillors would mean 1 Councillor for all of the former areas of Tiaro, Woocoo and parts of Maryborough, 3 for the balance of Maryborough and 6 for the balance of Hervey Bay and surrounds. The current arrangements allow for each Councillor to represent the

entire region. There is currently a review of the electoral arrangements and the Council may look at this matter further if there are changes to the Act.

Q 8:

Participants asked for greater access to Councillors for face to face consultations and not just communication by telephone or email.

A:

All the Fraser Coast Regional Councillors represent the entire region (not just divisions) and as such make themselves available to all residents for consultations. All the Councillors' mobile phone numbers are on the Council's website, in the Council's quarterly newsletter, Fraser Coast Living, and in the Council's monthly newspaper column Fraser Coast Matters. Residents who want to talk with a Councillor should contact them directly to make an appointment.

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