

# River Heads Community Briefing



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Dear Residents,

Thank you for attending the fifth 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 River Heads District 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:** is the Council lobbying for the classification of River Heads Road to be changed from a local road to a state government controlled road especially as the MRD are about to review regional plans?

**Answer:** The mayor and CEO are continuing talks with the State Government on the future of the road and funding for upgrades. River Heads Road has been identified as a Local Roads of Regional Significance (LRRS) and consequently there is TIDS money in the Department of Transport and Main Roads' Roads Implementation Plan (RIP) for future upgrades. The timing of the funds and works will depend on DTMR priorities. The Council is in regular contact with DTMR to lobby for funding.

**2:** Some areas of River Heads have kerb and channelling and others do not: what are the plans to increase the amount of kerb and channelling and is there a list of future projects.

**Answer:** At this stage increasing the amount of kerb and channel in River Heads is not included in the Capital budget. The issues raised will be taken on board as part of the annual review of the Council's 10 Year plan.

**3:** What is Council doing to fix up problems where water ponds in table drains and is seeping into basements of nearby houses?

**Answer:** Table drains are regularly inspected and maintained. If residents have a concern that water is ponding and causing problems they can contact Council and request an investigation.

**4:** Half of Joycelyn Terrace has kerb and channel the other half does not. Water is flooding yards and eroding landscaping?

**Answer:** At this stage increasing the amount of kerb and channel in River Heads is not included in the Capital budget. The issues raised will be taken on board as part of the annual review of the Council's 10 Year plan.

**5:** There is a need for a walkway/footpath beside the road from the top of the hill to the barge landing and car park. Cars are parking along the road and it is dangerous for people walking to and from their vehicles.

**Answer:** This will form part of further discussions with Kingfisher Bay Resort and Village. This also relates to Question 24.

**6:** Can Council help lobby for a bus service to Urangan Point State School?

**Answer:** Parents should contact the bus companies so they can gauge the level of demand for a service. The Mayor will write to Education Queensland to inform them of the request. Parents could also lobby the State Government to have a Kango bus service approved for the area

**7:** Can regular bus services to Hervey Bay be started to cater for residents who do not have vehicles?

**Answer:** Residents would be best served by organising a survey/petition to determine the demand for a service and passing that directly to the bus companies and State Government to have bus services started. Council can support the call of residents by does not allocate bus routes or financially support the operation of scheduled bus services.

**8:** What is the progress on the Fraser Island barge using the river boat ramp? Will the ramp be made bigger so boaties will not be interrupted?

**Answer:** See answer to Point 24.

**9:** There is a concern that Council thinks of River Heads as a rural area. It should be referred to as an urban area; what does Council feel?

**Answer:** River Heads is an urbanised rural area. Council will avoid references to River Heads as a rural area in future publications.

**10:** Can Council increase action to stop vacant blocks becoming overgrown? Properties that are repeat offenders should be inspected more regularly. Is there any way of reminding people to clean up blocks and not have property owners wait for a notice from the Council to do something?

**Answer:** The frequency of inspections is increased in summer months when the grass was actively growing. An inspection program has been developed for the area to ensure that all blocks are surveyed on a regular basis to reduce the potential for long grass. It is the block owner's responsibility to maintain their land.

**11:** Can the contractor who mows the footpaths/verges survey blocks and report any that need attention rather than waiting for complaints to be logged and inspections undertaken?

**Answer:** It is our intent to ensure blocks are maintained via programmed surveys rather than complaints. This should reduce staff workload while improving the overall level of compliance.

**12:** Can more guide posts, similar to those on the new section of river Heads Road, be installed along the length of the road to create the impression that it services an urban area and is not a rural road?

**Answer:** Council will install additional guide posts as requested.

**13:** Does council undertake mosquito and midge control past Benston Road?

**Answer:** Mosquito control is generally undertaken within the River Heads area by aerial treatment (using a helicopter). Each treatment covers around 350 hectares. As salt marsh mosquitoes can fly many kilometres the control undertaken within the area is designed to reduce the number of mosquitoes within not just River Heads but also the surrounds including Hervey Bay.

**14:** Can council take action to stop mosquitoes breeding in natural lakes on private property in Cecily Terrace?

**Answer:** Action can be initiated to reduce breeding of mosquitoes on private land. If we are provided with details of where breeding is taking place investigations can be undertaken. It is however unusual for large scale mosquito breeding in natural lakes as usually these types of water body contain natural predators which devour any larvae (wigglers) in the water.

**15:** Is the midge committee still meeting regularly? When is the midge committee meeting?

**Answer:** The next Biting Midge committee will meet soon and a representative of the River Heads Progress association will be invited to attend. If the Progress association has any items for the next agenda could they please forward them to Carolyn Lynch at the Council offices in Hervey Bay or by email on [Carolyn.Lynch@frasercoast.qld.gov.au](mailto:Carolyn.Lynch@frasercoast.qld.gov.au)

**16:** Have the new smart metres been installed in River Heads?

**Answer:** Yes smart meters have been installed at River Heads. They are not being reading them from a vehicle as that mode only picks up the current reading. WBWC are walking between meters and uploading approximately 130 days worth of hourly consumption data. While the data is automatically retrieved from the meter via a radio signal it is then manually verified as a means of quality assurance.

**17:** Why do pools have to be fenced if dams do not?

**Answer:** Pool fencing is controlled by the State Government. The legislation specifically excludes dams from the pool fencing requirements.

**18:** Can parks be mowed more regularly, especially in summer?

**Answer:** Parks are mowed on a regular schedule. The frequency depends on available staff and equipment and growing season. If the organisers of community functions give Council enough notice special efforts will be made to have a park mowed.

**19:** Can the shrub behind the recently installed war memorial be pruned so it does not over hang the memorial?

**Answer:** The Hall Committee has permission to prune the shrub as needed.

**20:** Why do ratepayers have to pay 12 months in advance to obtain the 10% discount? Why can't ratepayers pay three-month or six-month instalments and still obtain the discount?

**Answer:** Council issues its Rates Notices annually in line with the practices of three of the four former Councils (Hervey Bay, Tiaro and Woocoo). Ratepayers will have the option to pay upfront and receive a 10% discount if payment is received within 45 days of the date of issue or can pay by installments without incurring penalty interest charges.

Council recommends that ratepayers on fixed incomes consider making regular payments in person, by phone or internet as detailed on the reverse of the Annual Rates Notice.

**21:** What are the costs involved in mailing out rates notices in six-monthly instalments?

**Answer:** To rate six monthly it was estimated to cost in the issue of rates notices alone an additional \$163,000 (Cost Annual Notice \$162,150 compared to Cost of Bi-Annual Notice - \$325,000). To assist in alleviating the impact on ratepayers Council has offered an extension to the discount period from 30 - 45 days and the option of four instalment payments without penalty if paid by due date.

**22:** What was the rates increase this year?

**Answer:** In formulating the budget Council listened to the community. The condition of roads, provision of waste facility services and the maintenance of our parks and natural areas were high on the list of priorities raised at community briefings held across the region.

Council was mindful of the current economic climate and outlook when developing this budget which focuses on maintaining existing services, investing in core infrastructure and retaining jobs, balanced with the community's ability to afford a reasonable rate increase.

This is a “back to basics” budget, with an overall increase of 6.20% in revenue from General Rates to fund essential services and infrastructure.

To keep the general rates increase to a modest increase it was necessary for Council to identify a 3% reduction in operational costs to offset the impact of the global revenue contractions and help minimise the impact of escalating costs.

Council determines through its budget deliberations how much it costs to provide services and infrastructure to the community and the amount it required to be raised in rates. Land valuations are used as a mechanism to distribute this overall cost to ratepayers.

Council continued to rationalise the four former Council rating structures which has resulted in the "equalisation" of rates across the region. Equalisation has resulted in all Fraser Coast properties being categorised into a single rate structure with properties being rated equally across the region.

A residential property in Maryborough is treated the same as a residential property in Hervey Bay, Tiaro or River Heads.

The percentage increase in rates will vary depending on individual property land valuations, their respective rating category and former Council rating structure. While the Council has tried to be as fair as possible there will be some winners and losers under the rates equalisation, but it was a necessary part of the amalgamation process.

The Fraser Coast rating structure is evolving and will continue to be refined to ensure an equitable distribution of the rates burden.

The equalisation process unfortunately due to the large disparity in what residents paid under the four previous Council’s rating structures has resulted in some properties increasing by more than the average of 6.20%, whilst some have increased by less than the 6.20%.

In addition Council has experienced a considerable revenue reduction as a result of the global financial crisis and in formulating the budget Council listened to the community. The condition of roads, provision of waste facility services and the maintenance of our parks and natural areas were high on the list of priorities raised at community briefings held across the region.

Whilst Council collects rates from individual properties, the consolidated revenue is utilised to provide services across the region including roads, parks, libraries, swimming pools, health services, recreational facilities, cultural facilities, community services, planning, coastal and waste management.

### **23: Why have rates rise more than CPI?**

**Answer:** Unfortunately, to provide the necessary services to a large, vast and diverse community is costly. As a result Rate increases exceed the CPI index as this index is based on the cost of a basket of goods and services typically consumed by households; this is not reflective of the costs faced by Local Government.

The Local Government Index published by the Local Government Association of Queensland plots the cost increases in goods and services used by Council. The LGA Index has risen 5.3% during 2008 and the General Construction Industry index for Queensland increased by 6.2%, with road and bridge construction cost increases being as high as 12.9%.

**24:** What has happened to the proposed Kingfisher Bay barge terminal that was to be built at River Heads?

**Answer:** The resort has re-assessed its proposal. The Council is currently processing two applications by Kingfisher Bay Resort and Village to build terminals located in a Hervey Bay industrial estate and in the River Heads shopping centre.

Discussions are still taking place between the Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR) and Kingfisher resort and Village regarding increased usage of barge and boat ramps at River heads. A further update will be provided when this matter has been progressed further.

**25:** What is the future of a proposed marina in the Mary River near River Heads?

**Answer:** The developers are still investigating the proposal and talking with state government and private landholders.

**26:** What is the future of the golf course?

**Answer:** A developer has held preliminary talks with the Council but has not lodged any formal plans for the development.

**27:** If the golf course is approved what will be instituted to stop golf balls hitting houses backing on to the course?

**Answer:** Any golf course design would have to take into account measures to stop stray balls hitting houses backing on to the course.

**ENDS**