

# 'We've had a gutful of this' Council told

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Up to 150 people from across the region attended the meeting, which started with a series of questions from the Chamber's Nev Smith answered by either Mayor Bill Shannon, or Council engineer David Trotter or Tony Rooks.

Nothing new was stated; although this might have been the first time those statements had been heard by some in the crowd.

The questions covered aspects such as engineers consulted, the basic design of the bridge and the extra money required to give the bridge an art deco look.

Mr Trotter said the extra cost for the art deco was 3 per cent of the total cost "\$100,000, \$200,000 or \$300,000".

"Isn't 3 per cent of \$20 million '\$600,000'?" Mr Smith asked.

Mayor Shannon said the project would not have an open cheque book but acknowledged a \$20 million total that left Council to pay \$8 million would mean a 4 per cent general rate rise right across the region.

He dismissed suggestions of a levy on a benefitted area, saying it was not considered for East Innisfail, ignoring suggestions the benefitted area should cover all of Innisfail.

The mayor expressed his concern that the replacement bridge had to be built during the coming dry season, even though the State Government had

indicated its willingness to allow its \$12 million to be carried forward.

Many of the mayor's comments are covered in his Letter to the Editor on page 4.

The six councillors on stage were offered an opportunity to speak but only one, Mark Nolan, took up the offer.

"We are duty bound to follow due process," he said. "We are here to take on board your concerns."

## FROM THE FLOOR

Comments and further questions were invited from the floor.

While there was a strong contingent of people from "the south" it was evident that those with the greatest concerns and strongest statements were from "the north", more precisely from the rural areas of the former Johnstone Shire.

A Japoonvale farmer described the performance of the CCRC as "obscene".

Another speaker asked if the replacement Jubilee Bridge was "like Macca-roni's Bridge" why then was the cost of the former at \$20 million when the replacement for the latter was less than \$4 million.

The speaker said people wanted a basic bridge and was loudly applauded when he added "people don't give a stuff what the bridge looks like".

To one question, Mayor Shannon said Council could not handle paying

for all of a \$20 million project and "there are no other projects of that size in the wind".

One speaker from the south questioned the bridge usage metering, which recorded about 9000 vehicle movements a day, equal to 6.25 movements every minute of every hour of a day.

Only one person, a lady from East Innisfail, spoke openly of the need for a bridge for the "pensioners, students, mums and bubs".

One speaker from the south suggested the project be shelved until the \$8 million is delivered from the federal government.

The final speaker was from the north and best summed up why the meeting had been called in the first place - not by the concerns of those in the south but by the concerns of those in the rural north.

It was not only concerns about a replacement bridge but the whole way Council uses ratepayers' money.

"I pay three lots of rates and the Council grades my road once a year," he said.

"The grass on the side of the road is over my head unless I mow it myself.

"This is absolutely pathetic.

"And yet there are two Council blokes who travel from (their homes in) Cairns in separate Council cars every day.

"We've had a gutful of this."

And with that the meeting closed.