

Report on Cassowary Coast Regional Council Meeting

Thursday 27 May 2010

Minutes of the CCRC Meeting 13 May 2010: As no one from MBCA was available to attend this meeting and the minutes of this meeting were endorsed at the 27 May meeting, there are 2 items of interest.

1) Clump Point: Council considered a report on the usage of the boat ramp and pontoon at Clump Point as Council is considered to be responsible for management of these facilities. The resolution that was adopted states:

That

- 1) Council support the separation between recreational use and commercial use of marine facilities as an important principle in design and management that mitigates risk and congestion.
- 2) The following conditions apply to the use of the Clump Point pontoon
 - No refueling or transport of fuel permitted
 - For use by vessels under 10m only
 - All vessels to be recreational registered
 - Vessels tie up time at the pontoon not to exceed 10 minutes.
- 3) Council call on the Queensland Government to fund a Feasibility Study looking at short and long term options to provide appropriate marine facilities to meet both recreational and commercial tourism needs at Mission Beach and acknowledge that a commitment for this study was made to Council at the recent Community Cabinet meeting.
- 4) Council maintain as a matter of principle, that the design and management of all marine facilities should be consistent with the high environmental values recognized within the Cassowary Coast, and in particular Mission Beach.

2) Disaster Management: Cr Jennifer Downs advised that Council had been successful in an application for funding of \$500 000 to build an Education and Training Centre in Innisfail which will also be a co-ordination centre when needed.

Council Meeting Dates: Council meetings are held in Innisfail on the second Thursday of the month, where the meeting generally considers items relating to Works and Community Services and in Tully on the fourth Thursday of the month, where Planning and Environment along with Corporate Services items are dealt with. The confirmed dates are 08 and 22 July, 12 and 26 August, 09 and 23 September, 14 and 28 October and 11 and 25 November.

Heritage Register: Council supported the listing on the Queensland Heritage Register of the Ninney Rise property at Bingil Bay, the Busst memorial plaque also at Bingil Bay, with the proviso that this would include only the area within 1 metre of the plaque so that the access track from Bingil Bay to Brookes Beach would not be affected, and the Banfield Memorial Reserve and Grave on Dunk Island.

The house and land known as Ninney Rise is owned by the Queensland Government and the government is currently seeking expressions of interest for using the property for an eco-tourism venture. How the two are compatible remains to be seen. The memorial plaque is located on a road reserve which is under the Council's control. For the Banfield memorial management responsibility for the reserve rests with James Cook University and one wonders how highly this rates for a cash-strapped university.

The two other Heritage Register listings for the region were the See Poy House at 134 Edith St, Innisfail and the Innisfail Water Tower.

Bananas: Council considered a development permit for a material change of use for an agricultural property in Garradunga, where it was proposed to convert cane land over to bananas. It came before Council because the adjacent lot is a 16 lot rural residential subdivision. Council approved the change with a number of conditions of which the most interesting was #6 Chemical Spraying: the applicant owner is to ensure that no aerial spraying occurs at any time. Spraying on ground is only to occur at times of low to no winds.

Conservation Covenants in the old Johnstone Shire: JSC in the early nineties provided rate deferrals to land owners who entered into a Conservation Covenant with the JSC, where land containing vegetation was conserved. A 1992 Environmental Audit of JSC identified habitat as critical, Important, Important corridor/linkage, potentially critical/important, natural habitat/corridor and potential linkage corridor/habitat. If the land owner breaches the conditions by clearing or other activities, the rate deferrals become immediately payable along with interest. A maximum period of 10 years was set for rate deferrals, after which the rate deferrals cannot be recovered in the case of a breach of the Conservation Covenant.

For the CCRC this means that the rate deferrals must be written off as they are unrecoverable. At this meeting the amount of \$6108.29 was written off, plus all interest charged.

However there are to date 59 properties with Conservation Covenants and the total amount that has been deferred for rates and interest now amounts to \$685 024.11

Excess Water Charges: Council considered the case of a local business at Mission Beach, which was identified at the meeting as being Scotty's Backpackers, and Boyd Scott was present at this part of the meeting, where an undetected leak occurred in the water main on the property. Normal usage was about 6 to 8 thousand kilolitres between readings. The leak resulted in 43 521 kilolitres being used, which generated an excess water usage bill of \$26 801. The business has never had an excess water charge before and immediately on being notified of the problem on 19 August 2009 responded in writing to Council on 07 September that a leak had been found and rectified by a licensed plumber.

Council policy at present is that "No reduction will be approved for owners and occupiers of industrial or commercial premises as it is reasonable expectation that water usage is very closely monitored and therefore leaks are quickly detected."

Council has deferred a decision on this matter pending a policy review. Council accepted that no small business would act in such a way as to generate a bill of this magnitude and that the business is entitled to use 13 200 kilolitres before an excess charge would apply and had always been below this level.

Jubilee Bridge: Before debate on this topic Mayor Bill Shannon reminded Councillors that they were required by law to make decisions in the best interests of the region as a whole, and not to take into account divisional interests or re-election prospects.

The mayor suggested that the first decision to be made was whether a replacement bridge should be approved before considering the replacement options, and the appropriate motion was moved and seconded. Cr Carmel Silvestro moved that there should be a third option of deferral of the decision for a year. This motion was defeated with only Crs Silvestro and Sorbello in favour. The motion to build a bridge was then put and carried with Cr Sorbello against. The two options for the bridge were for a basic pier option (cost \$15 773 605) or for M shaped piers which were structurally stronger and would provide a longer life (cost \$15 773 605), the vote was carried unanimously for the acceptance of the tender from BMD/Albem for the M shaped piers. It is understood that BMD/Albem was the contractors for the Mulgrave River Bridge

The total cost of the project will be \$21 600 000 made up of bridge contract \$15 500 000, pile liners \$852 000, Deck units \$955 000 and investigation, design and land acquisition, contract administration and supervision as well as contingency \$4 293 000.

Funding will come from State government subsidy \$14 00 000, TIDS Roundabout Projects \$345 000, roads Separate Charge (North) \$657 000, Water Program \$200 000, Sewerage Program \$70 000, General Revenue \$528 000 and Queensland Treasury Corporation Loan \$5 800 000

As this report is being written after the media reporting of this debate, it is worth while looking at an issue the media has ignored and that is the cost of doing nothing. The bridge contract also includes demolition of the old bridge as this is more efficiently done by the construction contractors while they have equipment on site. The advisers to the bridge contract have estimated the cost of a stand alone demolition at \$1.1 to \$1.5 million. This would then mean relocation of water and sewerage lines by under river crossings at \$1.6 to \$2.2 million. Telecommunications relocation at \$0.6 to \$0.8 million. Roadworks for the Bruce Highway and local roads would cost anywhere between \$3.9 to \$5.2 million in total – how much would fall on the Council is unclear but it can

safely be assumed it would not to be zero dollars. Finally project investigation and design costs already incurred are known and amount to \$1.1 million. The total cost of doing nothing is between \$8.3 and \$ \$11.2 million, which makes a QTC loan of only \$5.8 million look like good value.

Management of Council Meetings: Twice during this meeting Council found itself in a situation where it had 2 motions on the floor simultaneously, which led to what can only kindly be called confused debate where some Councillors had no idea which motion they were speaking to. This occurred in the excess water charge discussion and the bridge debate. The latter resulted in the absurd situation where the motion to defer building the bridge for a year took precedence over the motion to build the bridge in the first place.

The solution lies in the Council's hands. Both venues have data projectors. There is no reason why the recommendations to Council, which form the basis for Council resolutions, cannot be sequentially presented so that motions and subsequent amendments can be shown as they occur. This would ensure that only one motion at a time is on the floor and that all Councillors fully understand what the text of the motion before them is.

Warwick Jull

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this report are mine and are not necessarily those of the Mission Beach Community Association.