



*A weekly
Update from
Cassowary
Coast Regional
Council Mayor,
Bill Shannon*

Community consultation

The community consultation phase in the development of a corporate plan for the Cassowary Coast Regional Council has been completed, with sessions held in the major centres with community leaders and the public.

The single exception is the public meeting at Mission Beach, which was cancelled when flood waters closed all access roads.

Input from the public at Mission Beach will not be overlooked and a public meeting will be held when the consultant, Brett de Chastel, visits the region in the near future.

There has been a very good response from community members.

Issues and emphases differ, but the following main points have become evident:

1. The appeals of our tropical lifestyle, including a healthy environment, lack of people and traffic congestion, our bio-diversity and natural beauty ranked very high.

2. There is concern that the economic diversity in the region needs to expand. The traditional agricultural industries, cane and bananas, are both under pressure and alternative industries need promotion urgently.

3. The lack of opportunities for youth – education, employment and recreation were often raised. These issues are commonly raised in rural Australia and are linked with the need to encourage new economic drivers for growth.

4. Many people emphasised the need for council to provide basic services and maintenance: the three “R”s – roads, rates and rubbish. With ever-increasing demands on local government and the cost pressures being faced, we should never lose sight of these basics.

5. The issue of communication, both for the region and the council was raised; and I agree, council’s image would be enhanced if we put measures in place to improve communication and public relations with the community. Council’s web site is already a useful tool, covering a broad range of topics and links to other sites, including updates on amalgamation issues, and is under constant revision. I trust my weekly column also plays a role in opening up the communication channels between myself and the community, by bringing readers up-to-date with current issues affecting residents within the region. The issue of how well we communicate is currently under the microscope.

6. There is a good deal of work that needs to be done to enhance and promote our region. This will encourage tourism which is already our second most important industry, but is seasonal and subject to economic factors often beyond our control. We need to enhance the appeal of working and living in a progressive region.

7. Environmental issues always rate highly in discussion with our residents. Whether involving cassowary conservation, recycling initiatives or planning controls, they are vitally important.

8. Council’s role in modern society was raised. The nature of local government is changing, with more being done in partnerships with industry bodies, community groups and other levels of government.

On hearing the broad issues raised I am encouraged, as the ideas expressed largely cover my concerns.

The next stage is determining the policies to achieve the desired outcomes.

The public will be invited to comment on the Draft Corporate Plan before it is adopted by council.