

Taree – 6 November 2019

Discussion summary

Council staff reported on how we plan to deliver the top five priorities from the Community Conversation held at Taree earlier in the year. Those present were invited to contribute suggestions on the detail of these projects to assist in our delivery.

Below are the top four priorities that were raised from the first round of community conversations and the commitment from Council.

Top four priorities identified in round one

1. **Advocacy for additional policing, social housing, health and education services**

Council has developed strong relationships with local, federal and state government members and Government agencies. This is key to ensuring advocacy for services in the local area is effective and timely. We will continue to take opportunities to advocate for local services and provide a voice for the local community into state and federal government.

2. **Beautification and enhancement of region**

Many communities have asked for CBD beautification and/or locality based beautification strategies. The importance of these strategies to the vibrancy and quality of our urban and commercial areas is recognised by MidCoast Council.

In response teams from the Liveable Communities and Infrastructure and Engineering Services divisions have recognised the need to develop specific localised beautification plans to increase the aesthetic quality of the natural and built landscapes in our central business districts while welcoming visitors and enhancing quality of life for residents.

A program has started to gather base information such as traffic levels, parking availability and pedestrian activity. This information will help to inform the concept planning and options assessment in future stages.

3. **Improve Local Roads**

We currently have a significant program of works on our roads. This level of investment will continue for at least the next four years before reducing to a lower level.

Our main priority is to manage the greatest risks on the network. This will mean that funding for the next few years will tend to be concentrated on our regional roads. These are the roads that connect our communities. They tend to have high traffic loads, higher speed limits and therefore are greater risk.

As we fix the worst areas on these high risk roads, we will be able to spread our maintenance resources further into the local road network and fix more of the things that are wrong. Over time our roads program will include more and more of the local roads that affect access to residences.

We are working on updating the forward roads program based on the funding levels that we are now projecting as being available into the future. Once this is complete, it will be presented to the community so that everyone can see what section of road is programmed to be done and when. We are also working on better reporting for our minor road maintenance activities so that the community can see what we have been doing in regards to roads maintenance and where.

4. Improve cycle ways and footpaths including connectivity

Many communities have asked for improvements to the footpath network in their area, including cycle ways. A Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan (PAMP) is the first step in addressing this. The PAMP will provide a framework for developing pedestrian routes and infrastructure to cater for the needs of all pedestrians; including older persons, people with mobility or visual impairments, young children, tourists, cyclists and recreational pedestrians. There is an emphasis on the development of commuter pathways as well as acknowledging the importance of recreational cycling for a healthy community.

The PAMP is being developed in conjunction with a Bike Plan which will identify opportunities for developing and enhancing pedestrian and cycle related activities and attractions for community members and visitors. A session will be held in Taree at **10am on 27 November**.

Further feedback on top four priorities

<p>Advocacy for additional policing, social housing, health and education services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have council policy to take advantage of opportunities • Need more police • More info on the issues listed • Where can I go to find out if not available at this forum • Any further information on the tertiary education issue • Need for mens shelter
<p>Beautification and enhancement of region</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let’s make it green and shady, it helps people stop rather than drive through • Walkways mowed etc • Establish more community gardens • RTA fix road signs • Ensure organisations pruning street trees, sterilise their equipment between trees to prevent spread of diseases such as mistletoe which eventually kills the trees, likewise spread of weeds from mowing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater usage of the river. It is the jewel of the Manning
<p>Improve local roads</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where road improvements lead to removal of mature trees – plan on replacing them where possible (leaving required sight lines) • Wingham Road, Cedar Party Road turn off needs passing lane • Cedar Party Lane needs repair • Are roads being fixed for long term not “cheaply” • Parking on the water opposite Council Chambers • Why can’t excess gravel be tidied/swept up as part of final cleanup of roadwork • Roundabout at corner of Manning Street needs review as population has increased • Increased population in Manning Valley means time to update to traffic lights • Standard of repairs poor • Surfaces are too thin on the tarmac • Tinonee Bridge – the concrete at the end has holes in it already • Fix roundabout at Pulteney Street near hospital, Bushland Drive hard to drive around in small cars • Make road surfaces easy for people with disability to use, don’t build up on tar • Airport end of High Street Cundletown in terrible condition, has heavy use by school buses • Can only access Taree via a narrow bridge – Martin or Dawson – Council needs to lobby state/federal government for new wider bridge
<p>Improve cycle ways and footpaths including connectivity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road numbering to aid essential services eg ambulance when roads are on either side of a turnoff • Cars parking on cycle ways • Cycle ways need to go somewhere • Footpaths should accommodate disability scooters • Cycle ways on roads like Wingham Road, Cedar Party Road, hard on broken edges, possible problem for cars/bikes • If you are seeking to increase cycle usage are you providing safe cycle track to park and publicising where they are?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Footpaths need to be wide enough to accommodate mobility scooters • Connect cycle ways and walking trails to make it a bigger adventure that brings new tourists
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Q & A session

Q: I was informed a couple of years ago that Georges Lane in Taree would be completely upgraded in a few years, but I have noticed the council is now upgrading Manning Street which is fantastic. But on the section they are upgrading the side streets will be upgraded as well in the near future, my main question is will Georges Lane get that upgrade as well?

A: Whilst we have planned work in progress for Manning Street, Georges Lane is not on our current program for renewal. We are aware of the defects and pavement condition. The road is narrow and provides access to local properties. At this stage it is not a high priority due to the relatively lower levels of traffic and road speeds. However, we will continue to monitor the road condition and reconsider the priority when the road renewal program is revised.

Q: Can Council investigate other forms of water recycling as part of a strategy to make better use of this resource? (increasing storage for example is not the sole solution).

A: Our Integrated Water Cycle Management Plan does identify water reuse as a possible option to manage our long term water supplies. We already have six recycling systems focussing on irrigation of some reserves, golf courses and agricultural property. When we revise our long term strategy the focus on recycling is likely to increase, particularly following the current drought conditions when water security and recycling is at the front of everyone's mind.

Q: Why is Taree's start time the only one to begin at 10am?

A: We changed the date to encourage more people to attend as the numbers were very low at the evening session in May, and today it is good to see a few more people here.

Q: Can the roadworks on Manning Point Road be widened to provide safe pedestrian access between Sandridge Road and Manning Point?

A: We have already upgraded several sections of Manning Point Road as part of our roadworks program. Work will continue on upgrading and widening them in future years. We will look at widening this section of road and provide a full sealed shoulder when it comes up in future years of the work program.

Q: Are EOIs being sought for construction of the southern wall at northern entrance to Manning River, as there is an opportunity to build it from the northern side more cheaply with the way the sand has been built up?

A: No, not by Council. In NSW breakwalls are managed and maintained by Crown Lands. Any new proposals for breakwalls is a matter for the NSW Government. Such proposals would need to be subject to detailed considerations and investigations such as alteration of the tidal prism and subsequent impacts on wetlands, urban stormwater systems, farmland etc, as well as an understanding of the expected increase in maintenance dredging requirements.

Q: Now that the consultant report on options for a southern wall on the Manning River entrance is in, has there been an EOI issued?

A: This is a matter for the NSW Government. The report prepared by MHL for Crown Lands makes it clear that the southern breakwall option is not compliant with MCA criteria and is assessed as low priority for government investment unless significant future benefits in the order of \$200 million can be demonstrated.

Q: Parking is happening on the cycle lanes and the cyclist needs to move out of the lane and on to the road to get around parked cars. Can something be done?

A: We need to review this as part of our planning process to identify where the impact is being felt and take action to keep vehicles from parking in the cycle lane. We don't want cyclists moved out of the cycle lane on to the road where there is a dedicated facility for them. In Taree, many of the areas may not be properly designated as cycle lanes. It has been a common practice to use the bicycle markings within the parking lane to raise motorists awareness to the likely presence of bicycles on the road. In these areas parking is permitted within the parking lane at any time.

Q: What credibility does this meeting have when the numbers here are so low?

A: Numbers are improved from our evening session in May however, irrespective of the numbers we are also visiting a number of other places and when we look at statics overall we are reaching around 500 people and it is identifying themes that we can follow up on across the MidCoast.

Q: Is Council looking at other ways of consulting with communities?

A: We get feedback from these meetings and from other consultations such as planning meetings. Over time you will see our organisation maturing and we have set some good targets with what we want to achieve – you will see improvements. We have many avenues to reach community and provide them with the opportunity to be involved.

Q: Does Council have any processes underway on how to reuse the water that is put through the sewerage system?

A: We will be encouraging recycling as part of the initiatives to save water and keep plants alive during the restrictions.

On a broader scale, there is a poor stigma associated with using recycled water for other purposes. Our Integrated Water Cycle Management Plan identified the development of Peg Leg Creek Dam as well as indirect reuse as options for the future. Indirect reuse involves highly treated recycled water injected into the sand aquifer and drawn out at bore field at Nabic.

As an industry we have the equipment and ability to safely do this. There are several areas of the world where this is already being done. It is likely that this will be part of the future discussions for many communities when it comes to long term water security.

Whilst ever we refer to water as “wastewater” we are inadvertently suggesting that it is no good. We need to look carefully at all water as a resource, it's too good to waste. The drought will provide a platform to be able to discuss this with the community in the future.

We already use quite a lot of recycled water from our treatment plants, especially Dawson River sewage works. There is a lot of positive benefits in this for agriculture and our community. There will be opportunities for us to upgrade our treatment capability and

expand the reuse to our sporting fields and other public areas in the future. Provided we can manage the costs involved without having to increase charges.

Q: Roundabout Manning Street and Albert Street, increasing population. Is it time to rethink it?

A: We will be revising the traffic arrangements for the CBD over the coming years as part of the plans to undertake beautification of the region and making better community spaces. We have started a program of gathering new traffic and pedestrian data to determine the best arrangements for the long term and identify what we need to plan to do to make that happen. It is important to keep the traffic flowing well through the whole CBD.

Q: Pedestrian access at traffic lights is difficult and often you are waiting for the cycles and it can take some time and then you only have a short time to cross the road.

A: The Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan should identify and address these areas of concern. Sequencing of the lights was probably done a long time ago and likely needs to be looked at. We do need to revise the priorities for pedestrian movements over traffic in some areas.

Q. Can you please tell me why this Council is the only Council to date from the regional Councils in NSW who were forced to amalgamate, who have decided that it needs to join together in one expensive building. I realise that you now already own the building, the former Masters store but better use could have been made of this building at a far greater return for the ratepayers outlay.

A: All the information about this project can be found on our website at www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/headoffice. This includes all the details on how the project will be funded.