

## She'll be right, trust me

### Sewerage

The latest news is that both Councils have agreed to go along with a completely new plan, which involves pumping raw sewage from the three villages at the beach to Tully for tertiary treatment and disposal to Banyan Creek.

An application has already been submitted to Department of Local Government and Planning for funding under the Small Communities Assistance Program (SCAP).

There has been no public consultation over this drastic re-working of the earlier SKM proposal that cost over \$200,000 to research.

The new proposal has been roughly costed at \$18.8 million which is just fractionally under the \$18.9 million of the earlier proposal.

In effect they are claiming that the cost of 24 Km of sewer pipe (which SKM said was the most expensive part of the works, and therefore justified having two treatment plants at the beach) will be offset by the efficiency of a larger plant at Tully, and the savings in not having to deal with the effluent by underground injection or surface irrigation.

Banyan Creek is already being polluted by the existing sewage treatment plant that is only a secondary treatment process, so with Mission Beach and Tully effluent being tertiary treated, the pollution will be less than now and so acceptable.

There are a number of unanswered questions about all of this:

☛ The SCAP has a budget of \$150 million over 10 years, i.e. \$7.5 million per six monthly funding round, and that has to support all the sewerage and water infrastructure for small communities in the whole State of Queensland. We already have \$6.5 million of funding locked in, and so we are after another \$12.3 million. Is this realistic? It wasn't last year when the last application was turned down.

☛ Some of the savings in the new project are due to the inclusion of Tully in the scheme. Does this still count as a 'small community' project, i.e. under 5,000 people?

☛ The SKM proposal was supported by pages and pages of alternative charging options. The joint Councils argued over the house-holder's annual contribution, and eventually settled on \$350 per year. Has this figure been changed? Cr Joe Galeano was unable to answer this simple question at the recent Progress Association meeting, and I am not surprised because I don't think this was discussed in all the rush.

☛ Are the household connection charges included in the SCAP application, or do people have to pay that as well? Will people have to pay the real cost of their own connection, or will the Councils average it out so everyone pays the same?

☛ Since Johnstone Shire residents' sewage will be taken on by Cardwell Shire, have the Councils reached agreement on a service contract that binds the two Councils to their respective responsibilities? The Councils' lawyers were unable to agree terms after months of haggling back in the days of the GH&D proposal. Has something changed?

☛ The land on the corner of South Mission Beach Road (that was bought for \$200,000 for the GH&D proposal, and later turned out to be unsuitable), is shown in the latest proposal as being sold for \$200,000. Does Cardwell Shire Council intend to sell this block, or does it intend to keep it and pay for it out of another budget? For what purpose? Has the public had the opportunity to discuss this and decide on its own priorities? Mission Beach needs a new library more than it needs another spare block of land.

☛ **WHEN is there going to be some community consultation on this 'she'll be right' mega-project, which will put Mission Beach in debt for the next 20 years? It is a condition of all SCAP funding.**

### Land-clearing legislation

A few months ago I wrote about the proposed subdivision on Lot 502 at Coolibah Street, Wongaling, that threatened the clearing of another 30 acres of cassowary habitat.

That development was lodged before the State Government's new *Vegetation Management Act (2000)* came into force, but the developer has asked Cardwell Shire Council to put the application on hold, and this has been agreed.

The VMA is intended to protect endangered ecosystems, and Regional Vegetation Management Plans will designate what these areas are. But the one for the Wet Tropics has not even been started on yet, and is not expected to be finished before 2004. In the meantime, local councils will refer developments for assessment under the VMA if they appear on 'remnant endangered' maps, which are available.

In the case of Lot 502, these maps show that the eastern two-thirds of the block is 'remnant endangered', and so will be protected by VMA. I understand that the developer is now thinking in terms of only developing the western end of the block. **This would be a good outcome.**

One remaining difficulty with this area is that Lot 501, on the opposite side of the creek from Lot 502, wants to have its access by coming across the creek, rather than directly from Tully-Mission Beach Road.

This creek is a Council Reserve for a cassowary corridor and is mentioned specifically in the Planning Scheme. It says under 5.2.2.4 :

*"(A) Development should not interfere with the function of this corridor and dogs should be contained within a fenced area.*

*(B) Development... should result in a higher conservation gain than the retention of the habitat corridor "*

If a road is put across this corridor it certainly will interfere with the functioning of the corridor, resulting in less conservation gain, not more. So access to Lot 501 will have to be from the Tully-Mission Beach Road.

Department of Main Roads have confirmed that this would be OK if the appropriate turn-off is built. It would entail the same kind of turn-off as for Mission Circle, which no doubt will be expensive, but necessary to conform with the Planning Scheme.

☛ **Dave Kimble**