

Local news

Subdivision of Lot 502

In my last article I wrote about the subdivision of Lot 502 at Coolibah Street, Wongaling.

Since then the Federal Department of Environment has written to Cardwell Shire Council and the developer, pointing out their responsibilities under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*.

This makes developments that might significantly impact on endangered species habitat referable to the Federal Minister, Senator Hill, for assessment.

The developer has contacted Council and asked for the development application to be put on hold.

Since all development that involves clearing cassowary habitat probably falls into this category, this process could have an important impact on the outcome of development applications in the years to come, and should be addressed in the new town plans being developed.

Sewerage

Yes, back to sewerage again. You will remember that the Johnstone and Cardwell Shire Councils submitted a joint application for funding for an \$18.9 million scheme under the State Government's Small Communities Assistance Program (SCAP).

This application has now been rejected.

In anticipation of this outcome, both Councils have been pursuing alternative options which do not involve working together.

Cardwell Shire has commissioned a study to look at pumping effluent to Tully, to be handled by the new treatment plant that is needed there in the next few years.

Various options were costed, including pumping raw sewage for treatment in Tully, and treating the sewage in Mission Beach and pumping the treated effluent to Tully for disposal into Banyan Creek.

Johnstone Shire has commissioned a study to look at the cost

of a tertiary treatment plant in Boyett Road with irrigation onto the surrounding land. This method of disposal doesn't have some of the drawbacks of groundwater injection – particularly the expensive research needed.

The plan is staged, with Stage 1 being to sewer from Eco-Village to Castaways, including the shopping centre and the caravan parks. Stage 2 adds the subdivisions of Royal Palm Drive, Kent Close and Conch Street, which already have sewers in place (but not in use). It is anticipated that the rest will be sewered progressively after that.

The costings are based on a charge of \$400 for residential and \$260 per pedestal for commercial, and a \$3,000 connection charge. However the State Government has said in the past that they intend SCAP funding to be available only when the residential cost would otherwise exceed \$435.

On the above basis, Stage 1 will cost \$5.7 million, and Stage 2 will add \$620,000. This does not include the cost of acquiring at least 45 hectares of land in Boyett Road.

The report doesn't state how much SCAP funding will be needed to make this work, which is a bit of an oversight, but it would have to be around \$5 million.

It is interesting to note that 71% of the load in Stage 1 comes from the caravan parks, resorts and commercial sites, although they will only be paying 61% of the cost, because of the cheaper pedestal rate. In other words residents will be subsidising the commercial sector. No doubt the commercial sector will argue that they are only full for a small part of the year, but the sewerage system has to be designed to handle peak loads, and so it is the commercial sector that is what is putting the cost up.

The irrigation of treated effluent will probably be by travelling overhead sprinkler system onto 30 hectares of grassland, giving 550mm per annum of effluent on top of the natural rainfall (average 3,173mm).

The report points out that an Environmental Impact Statement will

be necessary as part of the development application process, so it is not going to happen any time soon.

Flood-prone land

As more and more land gets developed in the Mission Beach area, the remaining bushland represents more and more unsuitable land for development, increasingly because it is flood-prone.

At some stage we are going to have to call a halt to development because all the remaining land is unsuitable for residential development.

Cardwell Shire is now at the beginning of preparing a new Planning Scheme and this process should be addressing the question of development of flood-prone land.

With this in mind, Environmental Management Group has written to the Council asking what policies are currently in place to regulate such development. The response was that building applications are only approved on land that is at least 3.5 metres AHD, (Australian Height Datum).

AHD is based on mean sea level for the three year period 1966-8, and so is approximately equal to 2.1m in the tide tables. A king tide like we have had just recently reached 2.0m AHD. It doesn't take much imagination to realise that a king tide coinciding with a storm surge is going to flood a lot of properties in the Mission Beach area, even if they are above 3.5m AHD.

I wonder what legal position the Council would be in if they have passed a building application and the building is subsequently flooded and its sandy foundations are undermined by a cyclone at high tide.

Progress Association

The Wongaling and South Mission Beach Progress Association will be holding its Annual General Meeting on March 15th at 7.30pm at Frog's Hollow. All welcome.

□ **Dave Kimble**