

## Marina update and cassowary safety

### The Petition

In June, Friends of Boat Bay presented Johnstone Shire Council with a petition of 516 names, and a letter asking that the purposes of Reserve 550 be changed from Boat Harbour to a Jetty Reserve, a Landing Reserve, and an Environmental and Scenic Reserve over the remaining 93%.

Johnstone Shire Council has formally responded to Friends of Boat Bay saying "Council recognises the need for adequate marine transport facilities at Mission Beach. Council considers it would be premature to take action to limit the scope or type of development by limiting the reserve as you suggest."

Premature, maybe, but with the possibility of maturing in the future, perhaps? Something has got to be done to put an end to the string of proposals to dig up Boat Bay that have had to be fought off over the years.

Now that the Reserve is partly in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, it is time to recognise its World Heritage values as a picturesque and bio-diverse ecosystem. Tearing a 14 hectare chunk out of its heart to build a marina cannot be considered to be 'environmentally friendly'.

And if you didn't sign the petition the first time round, you have another opportunity because the petition is open again. It includes a space where people can fill in their address. Currently about 25% of signers seem to be visitors.

What would be the fairest, most democratic way to determine community opinion on an issue?

In July 1999, Sinclair Knight Merz sent out 1,700 survey forms on sewerage to each household, and to absentee landlords in Mission Beach, Wongaling and South Mission Beach (not Bingil Bay). They got 390 replies, including 53 late, which was considered a 'normal' response.

Mission Beach Harbour Pty Ltd has asked Johnstone and Cardwell Shire Councils to include a survey on the marina in with the Council Rate Notice mailout. Cardwell rejected the idea, and I believe Johnstone will do the same.

### Planning Scheme

The next step will be the publication of the draft Planning Scheme, due in November. Friends of Boat Bay will be making a submission presenting its case in detail, and everyone who wants their opinion to be heard should write in then too.

That feedback then influences (hopefully) the final Planning Scheme, which we will have to live by for the next few years at least.

The current Planning Scheme has a section specifically dealing with developments in the Boat Harbour Reserve. It includes:

*"The development of a marine facility, excepting the replacement of the existing Clump Point Jetty ... should be subject to an Environmental Impact Statement, including an assessment of ..."*

... and listing 13 potential environmental, social, economic, and traffic impact areas.

Under the new Planning Scheme, a lot of town planning policy, rules and regulations will be standardized into 'Codes'. Small Councils, like Johnstone Shire, are expected to adopt standard codes developed by larger, better-resourced Councils, and tailor them to their local needs. We shall have to wait and see what the draft looks like. Hopefully this will bring some influence from southern Queensland, where the mistakes of over-development have been recognised already.

In earlier articles I have said that Johnstone Shire Council would be the Assessment Manager for the development, but it seems that in this case the Environmental Protection Agency will handle it. Council will be one of the assessing agencies, ensuring the development conforms to the Planning Scheme.

### Boat Bay video

A video by Peter Marsh is nearing completion, giving people a glimpse of the beauty of Boat Bay, and the challenges being faced by Mission Beach as it groans under the burden of being 'loved to death'. It is powerful stuff. Everyone should see it. It can be viewed at ...

the C4 Theatre.

### Report on Boat Bay marine life

In 1997 Department of Main Roads (DMR) commissioned DPI's Fisheries Research Centre, Seagrass Ecology Group, to 'identify potential marine environment issues' as part of upgrading the boat ramp.

The team recorded five species of seagrasses covering an area of 2.8 Ha. "A small patch of the seagrass *Enhalus acoroides* was found inside Boat Bay, close to the mangrove fringe."

They also found 1.8 Ha of hard corals growing on the fringing reef, and 3.7 Ha of brown algae (seaweed).

"Apart from hard corals and macro-algae, there was a high diversity of other marine life (eg., hydroids, sponges, soft corals, clams, red algae, green algae, and oysters."

### Cassowary speed limits

Department of Main Roads (DMR) has announced that it is extending its 80 Kph speed limit to the South Mission Beach Road. This is very welcome news, following the disappointment felt earlier when it was not included.

This road and its cassowary crossings were studied by Les Moore as part of his report to DMR, and it was his recommendation that the road be made 80 Kph – for the same reasons as were put forward for the Tully-Mission Beach Road.

The speed limit on the Tully-Mission Beach Road has been successful in lowering speeds significantly, and it only makes sense to extend the limit to the slower road.

Another step in the broader strategy for reducing cassowary deaths is signage, and we have all seen a increase in huge signs on the Tully-Mission Beach Road recently.

Frankly, I think it is now overdone with signs. I am sure the others on the consultative committee were as surprised as I was to see just how big the signs really were. There is now scarcely a photograph that can be taken anywhere in the World Heritage Area that doesn't have a sign in it.

I know I asked for signs, but this is ridiculous!

π Dave Kimble