

SUMMARY

The motion seeks to secure Clarence Valley Council commitment to cooperate with Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) and National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) for future funding from the Clarence Coast Reserve Trust to assist completion of the Yuraygir Coastal Walk

MOTION

That Clarence Valley Council commit to cooperating with DECC and NPWS for the purpose of completion of Yuraygir Coastal Walk and address an initial funding commitment in preparation of its 2010/2011 CCRT budget.

BACKGROUND

Provision of the Yuraygir Coastal Walk, also known as the Great Eastern walking Track when it was strongly promoted by the late Cr Joy Mathews as Mayor of former Maclean Shire Council in the mid 1990s, has been a recreational facility concept that has been talked about for a very long time.

Essentially the project centres on completion of a 65 kilometre walking track through Yuraygir National Park which is the longest stretch of protected coastline in New South Wales. The walk would link the Clarence Coast villages of Red Rock, Wooli, Diggers camp, Sandon, Brooms Head and Angourie.

The proposal would provide a unique, sustainable, recreational and bush walking experience and be a major economic driver through tourism. There are shorter and longer walk sections ranging between one and four days and numerous easy start and finish points as well as several accommodation options along the walk.

The walk uses existing infrastructure and attributes. No construction is required. It would link services at coastal villages and campgrounds and offer a variety of accommodation and catering services along the way. There are three river crossings to be negotiated.

ISSUES

Council was first approached by NPWS in October 2007 for a \$22000 project contribution to be funded in Council's 2008/09 budget. Council responded on 16th November 2007 that the matter would be referred for inclusion in the 2008/09 budget preparation processes. As Council is aware no amount was included in that budget or in the current (2009/10) budget

The first stage of the walk is well under way with \$25,000 funding from the Foundation for National Parks and wildlife and DECC. Signs, track markers and walking guide brochure will be completed I understand later this year. The other major issue to address is the river crossings.

The memory of the late Cr Mathews could be enhanced and maintained in perpetuity by the Council's commitment to support the project completion.

OPTIONS

Council could show leadership and commit to the project completion with DECC and NPWS by allocating a comparatively small amount of funds from CCRT. An allocation from General Fund is not being canvassed.

A do nothing approach has been the position of local government in the Valley for many years. The economic, recreational and social benefits from completion of the walk are very significant and highly desirable.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The balance of the CCRT at 30th June 2009 subject to audit is \$1.479 million and 2009/10 budget projection for the Trust is to fund the anticipated deficit in the Fund of \$1.287 million from CCRT Reserves including Caravan Park Surpluses

It has been my experience over the life of the CCRT that the anticipated annual capital expenses have not been realised and that the Trust balance has remained fairly constantly at over one million dollars. Two years ago DECC sought from Clarence Valley Council a contribution of \$22000 towards the proposed project. Even if that contribution was now larger because of inflation or other cost increases nevertheless that requested contribution could still readily be funded from the CCRT Reserve.

Councillor Ian Tiley
23rd August 2009: