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| <b>ORDINARY MEETING</b><br><br><b>22 NOVEMBER 2017</b> | <b>6</b> |
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## GREEN SPACE OUR PLACE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Louisa Grandy | 10/23/45-01 | #5562878

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**That Council notes the progress of the Green Space, Our Place Volunteer Program.**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

“Green Space, Our Place” (GSOP) is a community volunteer based program established in January 2016. The program was designed as an overarching framework to build on the success of other Council volunteer based initiatives at the Botanic Gardens and Cattana Wetlands. This report provides an update on the activities that have occurred under the program in the last 12 months and highlights the success and growth that has occurred during this time.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Long established ‘green space’ volunteer programs such as the Botanic Gardens “Down ‘n’ Dirty” gardening group, “Little Taccas” children’s nature activities program and Cattana Wetlands “Jabirus” have provided wide ranging benefits to Council and the general community.

In recognition of these benefits, “Green Space, Our Place” (GSOP) was developed to further enhance volunteer experiences and opportunities across the region. Volunteers under this initiative are now involved in a variety of activities from gardening, revegetation, nursery work, guided tours, general park enhancement, providing information at Friends House and Shop, assisting with fundraising events and giving plant information sessions to the community, as well as assisting with the administration of the Botanic Plant Collection Database.

In 2017 GSOP was expanded to incorporate the management of community gardens, neighbourhood open produce projects and the highly successful Tracks ‘n’ Trails initiative which assists in the management of the Mount Whitfield “Arrow” and Ivan Evans walking tracks.

In total, there are three positions within the GSOP team: a Volunteers Supervisor and two Volunteer Support Officers.

**COMMENT:**

GSOP vision is *'Building collaborative partnerships with Council and community to promote and develop the region, while connecting and creating opportunities to enrich lives'*.

Due to this program's direct community involvement, strong relationships are being created between Council and community. Being involved in the program contributes to an individual's personal growth as well as developing skills and competencies that enhance employability. Volunteers help keep the community active and resilient, especially in times of low employment, creating energy within the community that not only supports Council activities but also makes Cairns a great place for residents and visitors.

The most popular areas of the initiative are the group sessions that have been initiated and supervised directly by Council with registrations and inductions occurring weekly, however the community initiated groups are steadily growing as well.

Some pleasing examples of this collaboration include:

- Silky Oak Court residents (Attachment 1) with the support from the volunteer program, Council work depots, community and the divisional Councillor, have transformed their local park
- Stratford's Jalarra Park group has also had a great response from community with monthly working bees occurring to beautify and enhance the park (Attachment 2)
- The Friends of McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery joined the program earlier this year, creating a strong partnership between Council and the local organisation, Cairns Family History Society (Attachment 3)
- Strong partnerships between volunteers and Council have contributed to the implementation of the Keith Edwick Park Improvement Plan (Machans Beach) with upgraded facilities, landscaping and revegetation work.

There are also individual residents who plant and maintain areas adjacent to their properties. A good example of this can be found in Mooroolool (attachment 4 resident volunteer reserve work).

**Community Gardens**

Another area of expected growth is within 'community gardens'. GSOP took over management of these activities in May 2017. There are currently four established community gardens with two proposals currently being assessed in Gordonvale and Redlynch. GSOP provides support, advice and direction to the incorporated groups who manage these spaces and have developed some excellent relationships during this time.

**Open Neighbourhood Garden Projects**

Alongside the formal community gardens which are managed by established incorporated groups, GSOP has worked with local neighbourhood groups on various 'open neighbourhood garden projects'. These initiatives emerged from interest by small groups of residents who wanted to grow edible plants in and around their neighbourhood. The scope of these projects did not warrant formalised community garden status as they are not fenced or run by incorporated entities.

A trial of this new model in Draper Place has proved successful, engaging all residents and building community within the area. It has also set a precedent for future expressions of interest in these projects. Discussions are under way with two more groups in Whitfield and Edge Hill.

### Statistics

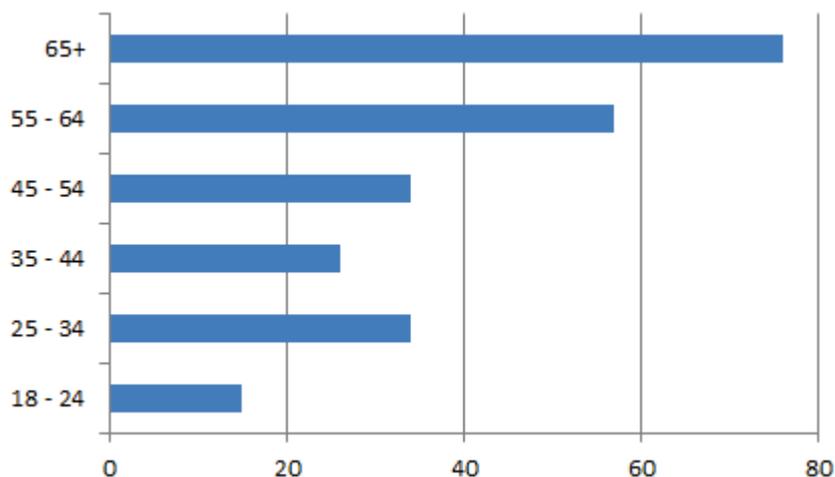
Since inception, registered volunteers have greatly increased from 71 to 245. The following table provides an overview of the programs development across a number of key areas in the last 12 months:

|  | <b>2015/16</b> | <b>2016/17</b> |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| Hours  | 12,387         | 25,571         |
| Newly registered volunteers                  | 57             | 151            |
| Individual residents                         | 8              | 23             |
| Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) | 37             | 49             |
| Volunteer in more than one group             | 39             | 60             |
| Gained work through volunteering             | 5              | 8              |

Involvement in GSOP programs increases the public's knowledge and understanding of Council's assets with research stating that every new volunteer creates access to a further network of between six and 12 people. This trend has certainly been observed in the statistics above.

Some other interesting insights into program participation include:

- Gender split: Female – 121; Male - 124
- Age of our volunteers





**OPTIONS:****Option 1: (recommended)**

It is recommended that Council notes the progress of the Green Space, Our Place Volunteer Program.

**Option 2:**

Councillors seek further clarification.

**CONSIDERATIONS:****Risk Management:**

Risk management is an inherent requirement of the program. All volunteers are inducted in accordance with the program handbook and operational procedures. Upon successful induction, volunteers are covered under Council's "Volunteer of Council" insurance. Site specific risks and hazards are identified by the volunteer supervisors prior to every session and all participants are issued the appropriate personal protective equipment in accordance with Council's policies and standards.

**Council Finance and the Local Economy:**

The GSOP is tracking under budget for the first quarter of the 2017/2018 financial year:

| <b>Operating Expenses</b> | <b>Sep YTD Actuals</b> | <b>Sep YTD Budget</b> | <b>Variance</b> | <b>2017/2018 Budget</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Employee Costs            | 51,418                 | 65,816                | 14,398          | 256,693                 |
| Materials and Services    | 8,539                  | 18,199                | 9,660           | 72,799                  |
| Internal Charges          | 15,870                 | 6,847                 | (9,023)         | 27,389                  |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>     | <b>75,827</b>          | <b>90,862</b>         | <b>15,035</b>   | <b>356,881</b>          |

**Community and Cultural Heritage**

GSOP seeks to engage local people that care and want to have more involvement and ownership in the presentation of their local gardens, parks, reserves, waterways and walking tracks.

The guiding objectives of the program are:

- To enhance the general appearance of Cairns parks and reserves
- Promote and instil community pride in local parks and reserves
- Reduce anti-social behaviour and vandalism in parks and reserves
- Provide a sustainable future for one of the City's major assets.

This program proves to be successful for both Council and the community in delivering mutually beneficial outcomes. The program aims to link different sectors of community in constructive ways and provide benefits to the volunteers themselves, such as social inclusion, physical and psychological wellbeing as well as career opportunities.

**ATTACHMENTS**

From Green Space Our Place – Volunteers Voice magazine:

Attachment 1. Silky Oak Park volunteers

Attachment 2. Stratford's Jalarra Park volunteers

Attachment 3. Friends of McLeod St Pioneer Cemetery

Attachment 4. Mooroolbool resident reserve work



Brett Spencer  
Manager Community Development



Linda Kirchner  
General Manager Community, Sport & Cultural Services

Attachment 1 – Silky Oak Park volunteers



Silky Oak Court park receives a make-over

Earlier this year Silky Oak Court residents in Mooroolbool became involved with their local park to build on community connections and improve the space for local children.

A little energy is contagious and Council and Cr Terry James were soon supporting them.

Plants have been planted, old infrastructure replaced and there are new benches and an upgraded playground.

Resident Carolyn Scott has been keeping us up to date with emails such as this one,

"Your workmen (Council) did a cracking job on the playground. All done by 3.30pm today, giving my grandson and his best friend a 'first go' on it, shortly followed by other children who just seemed to emerge from the houses. Looks like a beady eye or three have been keenly awaiting the event!"



Attachment 2 – Stratford’s Jalarra Park volunteers

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## rehabilitates Jalarra Park creek

Hazel Lees

How did we get so lucky to have this wonderful park, one of the largest open spaces in the Cairns region, in the middle of Stratford?

It was originally State government land reserved for education and police purposes. When it became obvious that the land was too small for a secondary school, the government planned to sell it for residential development. From 1986 however, members of the local residents' association (now called Stratford & Freshwater Community Association), had worked closely with Mulgrave Shire councillors and staff to have the land retained for a park.

When Cr Lesley Clark became the State MP for Barron River, she continued the lobbying effort with the Treasurer and the Minister for Lands. The combined effort was successful and the majority of the land was handed in trust to Mulgrave Shire Council in 1993.

Residents held a community day on the land in May 1994. Only the police reserve section was sold for housing, now Stratford Chase. After amalgamation of Cairns City and Mulgrave Shire councils, trusteeship devolved to Cairns Regional Council.

Landscape Architect Anton van der Schans drew up a Jalarra Park Master Plan with native plant expert Rob Jago. The concept was for an arboretum showcasing native species in the top area of the park, grading to active recreation use lower down. Volunteers participated in community planting

days but their enthusiasm was dampened by the theft of newly planted trees. An example of the early plantings is the ring of Jalarra trees near the Wilunga Street entrance. Jalarra, after which the park is named, is an Aboriginal name for the satinwood tree, *Buchanania arborescens*. The fruit of these trees was an important food source in Gurrabana (the wet season).

A recent Council survey determined how people use the park now, and what improvements they would like to see. The survey indicated that most people like the park pretty much as it is, with the existing children's play equipment and BBQ shelters being the only structures.

Council's survey asked if residents would be interested in volunteering in the park and subsequently a group has been formed as part of *Green Space Our Place* program.

The first project is to rehabilitate the little creek in the south west corner of the park by removing Singapore Daisy, laying mulch, and then re-planting with native species to stabilise the banks and encourage endemic fauna and flora.

We welcome anyone in the community to join us. You will be registered with the *Green Space Our Place* program and provided with protective clothing and other equipment.

It's definitely a labour of love, especially hauling out the dreaded Singapore Daisy, however mulching is very satisfying, as will be the planting planned later in the year.



Meeting with *Green Space Our Place* officers for the first time to discuss volunteer opportunities in Jalarra Park - Margaret, Maureen, Tim, Hazel, Les and Rob

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## Attachment 3 – Friends of McLeod St Pioneer Cemetery



## Introducing our latest group The Friends of McLeod St Pioneer Cemetery

The Friends of McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery, a project of Cairns Family History Society (CFHS), has joined the *Green Space Our Place* program.

The group held their first working bee on 1 July. Members Kathy Petersen, Coral Smith, John Bawden, Leila Trentfield, Cynthia Edwards and Dell Deed began work on the entrance pathway gardens clearing the ferns, weeds and vines.

“Everyone worked well together and we created 15 wheelbarrow loads of green waste and a bag of bottles and other rubbish that they collected from the hedge,” said Dell.

“There were also many visitors to the cemetery while we were there which was very pleasing to see.

“We were all pleased with the work completed and how good the path and hedge looked and keen to do more. Since then the group, also including members Aileen Park, Bill Brennan Sandra Bawden, has met a number of times and are pleased with the results.

Council supported the cemetery clean up with tree and major ground work prior to ‘Shadows of the Past’, a successful annual event run by CFHS.

From left, back row: Bill Brennan, Leila Trentfield, Dell Deed; front row: Sandra and John Bawden, Aileen Park, Cynthia Edwards and Coral Smith

Attachment 4 - Mooroolbool resident volunteer reserve work



**Reserve transformed**

**Resident volunteers transform reserve drainage behind home**

Mooroolbool resident volunteers Frances Hogan and Steven James have transformed the drainage reserve behind their home.

This area was very weedy and overgrown. Frances and Steven, approached *Green Space Our Place* asking if they could plant the area to stabilise the banks. Council sprayed the weeds and supplied plants and hay.

Pictured is what they have achieved - such a transformation!

Looking over the back fence, before landscaping