

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE**13 MARCH 2012****6****CAIRNS ESPLANADE EMERGENCY HELIPAD**

Malcolm Robertson MR: 1/59/13-01: #3891787

RECOMMENDATION:**It is recommended that Council:**

- a) Notes the advice from the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Board that the Esplanade helipad will remain in its current location; and**
- b) Agrees to return the adjacent closed section of Esplanade car park to parkland at Council's cost.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Board (the Board) has identified that there is no benefit to be gained from moving the helipad 25m, as had been proposed. The Board has now requested that the closed section of car park be returned to parklands.

There is positive benefit to Council in removing the closed section of car park as quickly as possible.

The Board has confirmed they will continue to work with Council to secure a lease in relation to the helipad.

BACKGROUND:

The emergency helipad has been in place on the Cairns Esplanade for approximately 20 years. Previously the helipad was positioned around 100m to the south of its current location in the centre of a large parkland area. In 1999 it was moved to its current location to bring it into closer proximity to the relocated emergency department.

The hospital car park across the road from the Cairns Base Hospital was installed as a temporary car park during the redevelopment of the hospital in approximately 1997, with provisions made at that time for the temporary car park to be reinstated to parkland immediately following the development of the multistorey hospital car park.

Changes in helicopter size in early 2009 created potential hazards from windblast to the parkland area surrounding the new helipad, including a large section of the car park. For this reason 32 car spaces within the car park have been closed to the public since June 2009.

The Chair of the Board, in October 2012, sought to address this issue by moving the existing helipad around 25m to the southeast, at the same elevation. The helipad was proposed to be upgraded at this time to include in-ground lighting and uninterrupted power supply. Costs would be borne by the Hospital.

The Board also sought a Trustee Lease for the land surrounding the helipad to enable their security staff to have delegated authority to control access during landings.

Resolution was passed on 14 November 2012 “that Council:

- a) advises the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Board that Council is supportive of a Trustee Lease being entered with Queensland Health for the purpose of maintaining an emergency services helipad public exclusion zone on the Cairns Esplanade;
- b) notes that the location of the lease area shall be subject to further discussions between the parties, with a preferred outcome being that the car parking spaces currently closed are reopened for use;
- c) notes that the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Board be responsible for all costs associated with the creation of the lease as well as any site works and improvements needed as a result of the helipad and car park works; and
- d) delegates authority to the Chief Executive Officer under Section 257 of the Local Government Act 2009 to finalise any and all matters in relation to above actions.”

COMMENT:

The Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Board has further investigated the proposed relocation of the helipad. Discussions with Emergency Management Queensland identified that moving the helipad would not resolve the downwash hazard. For this reason the relocation is no longer an option under consideration and the Board has advised it wishes to upgrade the helipad in its current location.

The Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Board has now requested that Council return the closed section of the car park to parklands, as it will continue to be an area subject to helicopter downwash.

It is now proposed that Council agrees to remove the closed section of car park and returns this area to open parkland. These works will be carried out by Cairns Works and Parks and Leisure officers.

The Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Board has indicated that they still desire tenure over the land surrounding the helipad and will continue to work with Council to secure a lease.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Corporate and Operational Plans:

There are no specific Corporate or Operational Plan considerations relating to this matter. This report addresses a proposal submitted to Council.

Statutory:

The Cairns Esplanade is Trust land in accordance with the provisions of the *Land Act 1994*. The existence of the emergency helipad is noted within the Esplanade Management Plan, however no formal tenure exists.

Council's main responsibility as trustee of reserve land under the *Land Act 1994* is to take all action necessary for the maintenance and management of the land and ensure that such actions are consistent with the purpose for which the reserve was dedicated.

It is considered that the helipad is an inconsistent use of the Reserve for Park and Recreation purposes therefore requiring the Minister's approval for the proposed trustee lease. The Minister may approve use that is inconsistent provided the inconsistent use will not diminish the purpose for which the reserve was dedicated or adversely affect any business in the area surrounding the reserve.

Policy:

The helipad is sanctioned in Council's Esplanade Management Policy No.1:06:03.

Uses or activities not mentioned within the Cairns Esplanade Land Management Plan or 2005 Cairns Esplanade North Parklands Secondary Use Management Plan require approval under the *Land Act 1994*.

Financial and Risk:

The Board originally offered to meet the costs of a helipad relocation of some 25m. The previous Council resolution was that Queensland Health would bear the main costs associated with the agreed car park solution. Cairns Works Construction has estimated costs to demolish the car park area and reinstate turf and irrigation to be \$64,387.

There is on-going risk to Council's reputation from the 32 car parking spaces remaining closed to users in an area that suffers from restricted available parking. Returning the closed parks to parkland will mitigate that risk.

Sustainability:

Not applicable in this instance.

CONSULTATION:

Queensland Health and Emergency Services Queensland has been consulted in relation to this report.

OPTIONS:

Option 1: (Recommended)

It is recommended that Council:

- a) Notes the advice from the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Board that the helipad will remain in its current location; and
- b) Agrees to return the closed section of car park to parkland at Council's cost.

Option 2:

- a) Notes the advice from the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Board that the helipad will remain in its current location; and
- b) Requires the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Board to be responsible for all costs relating to returning the closed section of car park to parkland, as per the original agreement.

CONCLUSION:

Relocating the Helipad as originally proposed by the Board would not address the identified hazard from down blast. Removing the car parking spaces will keep vehicles outside the hazard zone and mitigate the risk.

Public perception is that Council has closed the car park and failed to take action to address the issue. Council returning the closed section to parkland as soon as possible will remove that perception.

ATTACHMENTS:

Nil.

Malcolm Robertson
Inner City Facilities Manager

Brett Spencer
Manager Parks and Leisure

Ian Lowth
General Manager Community Sport and Cultural Services