

ORDINARY MEETING	8
24 APRIL 2019	

**CRYSTAL CASCADES IMPROVEMENT PLAN, REDLYNCH INTAKE ROAD,
REDLYNCH – DIVISION 6**

Luke Jackson | 73/2/22 | #6041074

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council approves the Crystal Cascades Improvement Plan for public display and requests a subsequent report on the outcomes of this engagement.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Crystal Cascades is one of the most iconic natural swimming areas within close proximity to Cairns. The area offers multiple recreation opportunities including swimming, walking, nature observation and picnic facilities. Crystal Cascades provides one of the few crocodile and stinger free, fresh water swimming options for tourists and residents in Cairns. Because of this, the area experiences very high visitation that has been increasing in recent years. The infrastructure at the site is ageing, is unwelcoming and is no longer able to meet the volume, recreational needs and expectations of visitors.

An improvement plan has been developed to address key issues. Key outcomes proposed are a revised car parking layout to enable faster pick up and drop off for tourist vehicles; faster turnaround of vehicles using the car park; an expansion of the car parking area to accommodate additional spaces; an upgrade to the entry signage to provide a welcoming atmosphere fit for the site; improved toilet amenities including new change rooms and CCTV; new pathways linking the toilet amenities and the car parking to the entry to improve safety and pedestrian circulation at the site; provision of new improvements to replace the ageing infrastructure (i.e. shelters, seating, BBQs, bins, bubblers, etc); improved landscaping in the car parking and entry areas; and a new boardwalk and deck to enable inclusive access to viewing opportunities of the creek.

The project in its conceptual form is estimated to cost \$1.54 million. \$1 million has been allocated to the project under Works for Queensland Round 3. Operational costs for the site will marginally increase.

It is recommended that Council endorses public display of the draft plan for the purpose of community feedback. A report on the outcomes of this engagement will be prepared for future Council consideration.

BACKGROUND:

The Crystal Cascades recreation area was developed in conjunction with the construction of water supply services for Cairns. It is located on Lot 50 NR 6547 and Lot 5 NR 832 at the southern end of Redlynch Intake Road in the Redlynch Valley. The access road to the recreation areas of the site was constructed initially to provide access for maintenance vehicles servicing the water supply infrastructure from Lake Morris to Cairns. The implementation of the service road enabled a new accessible recreation opportunity for residents and visitors to Cairns. There are multiple swimming locations and access to them along the service road, as well as opportunities to view the cascades and the surrounds from viewing areas. Day facilities are provided in the form of toilet amenities, car parking, interpretive signage, picnic shelters, BBQs, seating, bins, bubblers and viewing decks.

The site has become very popular for local Cairns residents as well as tourists for recreational purposes. This is largely due to a combination of providing a crocodile and stinger free, safe swimming environment; pristine fresh water; and lush tropical rainforest all within very close proximity to Cairns. Because of this, large volumes of visitors, particularly in the dry months, utilise the site and are increasing the strain on existing infrastructure. The site has undergone very limited improvement or upgrades in recent years and the infrastructure is no longer fit for current user requirements, has reached the end of its usable life, is unable to cope with user demands - particularly car parking areas - and therefore requires upgrading.

COMMENT:

The draft improvement plan (refer Attachment 2) has been developed following site analysis and assessment of issues, constraints and opportunities. The key elements proposed are as follows:

- Revised car parking layout and expansion to enable faster circulation and turnover of vehicles through the site, extra car parking and new bus parking areas.
- Upgrade to the entry experience to provide improved welcome and site signage, entry statement and gating.
- Extension to the amenities block to include change rooms and CCTV.
- New pathways directly linking the entrance to the amenities block and new car parking/bus lay down area.
- Provision of new site amenities to replace existing old ones. This will include new shelters, seating, picnic tables, BBQs, bins and bubblers.
- New landscaping at the entry and car parking areas to improve sight lines and provide a highly aesthetic entry space.
- New boardwalk and viewing deck at the lower section of the site to provide visitors a more accessible viewing opportunity close to the carpark. This is intended to enable people to visit and experience the site without needing to walk lengthy distances and hence improve turnover in the carpark by reducing visiting times by some groups. This also provides inclusiveness for groups who presently have difficulty or can't access the viewing areas located farther away from the car park.

The plan is proposed in two stages, these being:

Stage 1:

Upgrade and expand the car parking area, provide a new bus lay down area, provide new linking pathways between parking areas and amenities, upgrade amenities including new shelters, picnic settings, seating, BBQs, new landscaping and provide new more welcoming entrance to the site.

This stage is estimated to cost \$1 million and is funded by Works for Queensland Round 3. However, detailed designs will better inform the scope of works capable of being funded.

Stage 2:

New boardwalk and viewing deck.

This stage is estimated to cost \$546,000 with \$150,000 set aside in 22/23 for stage 2.

OPTIONS:

Option 1: (Recommended)

That Council approves the Crystal Cascades Improvement Plan for public display and requests a subsequent report on the outcomes of this engagement.

Option 2:

That Council does not approve the public display of the Crystal Cascades Improvement Plan and considers an alternative action.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Risk Management:

Risks with the project largely revolve around funding of stage 2. It is considered that risks associated with public consultation and roll out of the funded component (i.e. stage 1) are low.

The proposed plan has been developed following site analysis and assessment of issues, constraints and opportunities. The intention is to seek the public's response to the proposed plans. This may result in modifications to the plan to ensure that any issues raised by the public are considered and addressed.

If formally endorsed by Council, the plan will be implemented in stages and risk relating to capital and operational impacts will be fully considered and addressed at each stage.

Council Finance and the Local Economy:

The total project indicative cost (at concept stage) is \$1.546 million. The proposal contains two stages. Stage 1 is \$1 million and is to be funded under Works for Queensland Round 3. Stage 2 is \$546,000 with \$150,000 set aside in 22/23 for stage 2.

Operational Cost

The current total annual operational cost to maintain the park is \$37,500. The cost to maintain the park in its ultimate form on finalisation of the improvement plan is estimated at \$56,100 annually, a difference of approximately \$18,600 over the current cost. The operating budget impacts will need to be reviewed as stages are delivered.

Community and Cultural Heritage

The proposal will result in a greatly improved recreation space that is far more accessible for everyone.

Traditional owners will be included throughout the engagement process to ensure considerations are made in response to their representations.

Natural Environment

The proposed improvements will result in minimal change to the natural environment. The boardwalk is proposed to be located over a small drainage line that is largely vegetation free or has low level rainforest shrubs. The deck connected to the boardwalk is proposed to be fixed to existing or new foundations to ensure it is safe and robust. Some tree branches may be required to be removed as part of this process.

CONSULTATION:

The improvement plan is proposed to be publicly notified for a minimum of two weeks. Submissions received will be assessed and considered in the final plan presented to Council.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Location Plan for Crystal Cascades
Attachment 2: Crystal Cascades Improvement Plan

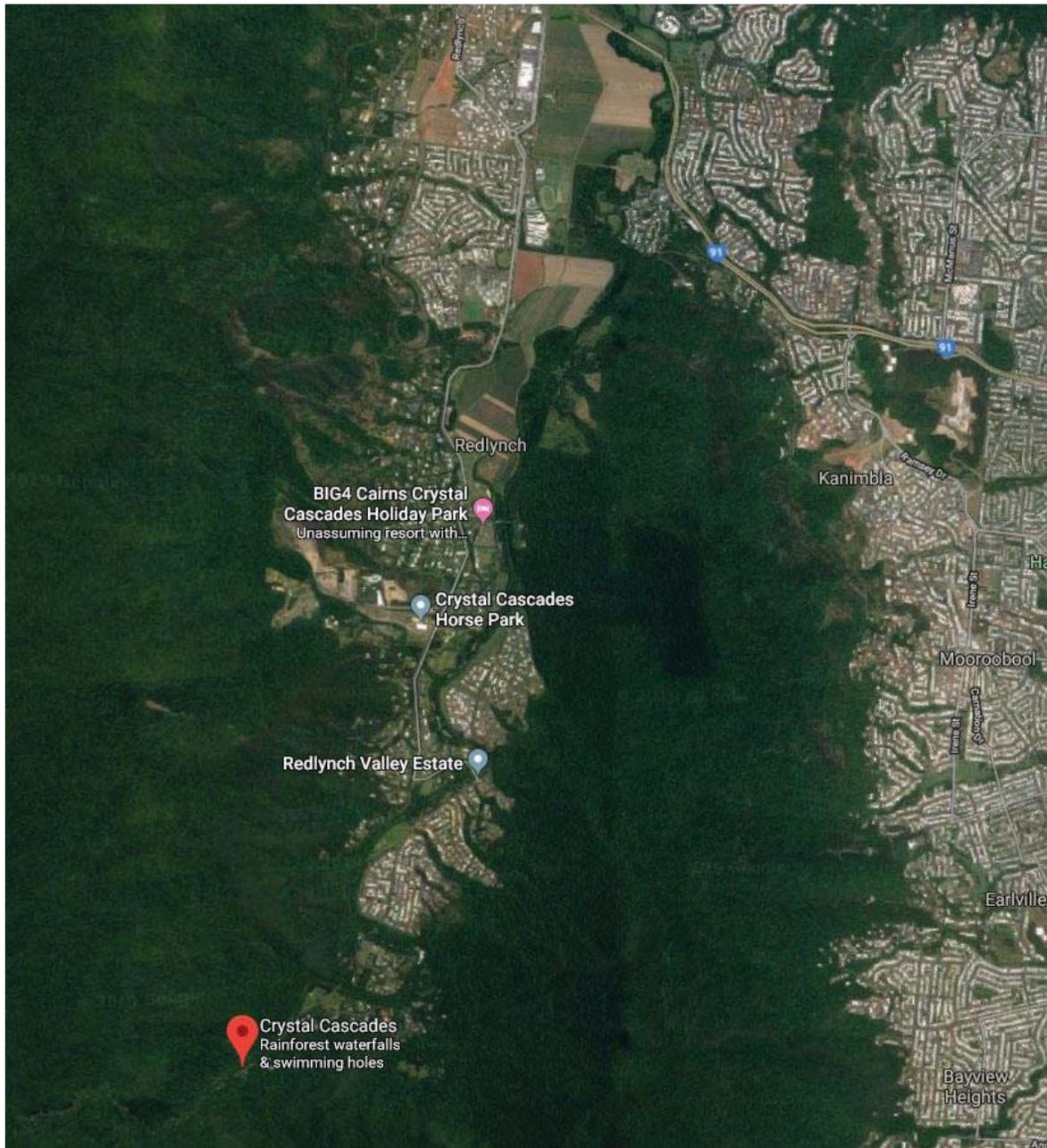


Brett Spencer
Manager Community Development



Linda Kirchner
General Manager Community, Sport and Cultural Services

Attachment 1: Location Plan of Crystal Cascades



Attachment 2: Crystal Cascades Improvement Plan



Additional Parking



1. Additional Parking

It is proposed that the existing drainage swale on the approach side of the entry road be filled, (over a new pipe and culvert underground stormwater system). This will allow tour buses to set down their passengers without entering the carpark, and wait for them with clear sight lines to the entrance.

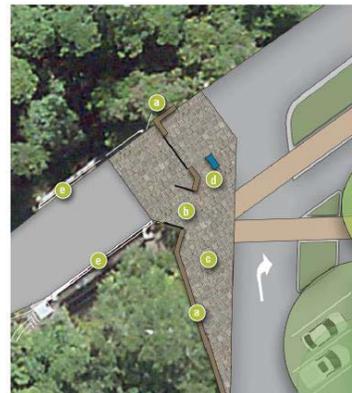
The existing entry feature would be removed, and a new direct, all weather path would be constructed to the entry.

New Entry

2. New Entry/Gateway to the Park

Create a new arrival experience to The Crystal Cascades Park that is more in keeping with the status of the asset. This would include:

- a. New pitched stone feature walls in locally sourced stone.
- b. Bespoke, lockable cast iron feature gates – with separate pedestrian and vehicular gates to allow for improved security outside of opening hours.
- c. A naturally paved gathering space for groups complete with welcome and informative signage about the site.
- d. Relocation (and refurbishment) of the existing entry sign to new arrival court.
- e. Stone pitched rails to the existing bridge- capable of withstanding a storm event, but still of high visual quality.





Crystal Cascades Entry - Concept



Connectivity



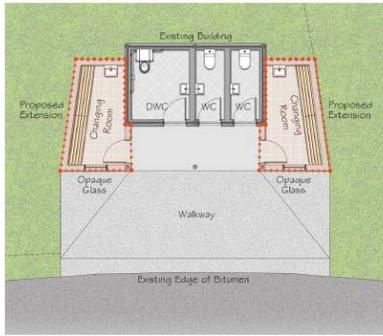
3. Pedestrian connectivity across the carpark

Two paths will be created within the entry carpark, with the entry gates as the obvious, visual pivot point.

As suggested above, a formal, all weather, paved path will be constructed along the visual axis from the bus park to the entrance.

A second pathway will be created in a direct sight line from the entry gate to the amenities. This path will be created with an applied treatment to the existing road surface.

Toilet Block Upgrade



4. Extension of Toilet Block

The existing toilet block is still functional. The pitched skillion roof had architectural merit at the time of construction, and is still an asset worthwhile of retention.

Consequently, options were explored.

As the concept design shows, it is recommended that the facility is rejuvenated and extended, with a changing room added on either side of the existing building. This will give patrons the option of changing in a purpose built changing room, independent of having to change in a toilet. As the building is in quite a sheltered location, glass bricks have been included in the façade to permit as much natural light into the changing rooms as possible.



New boardwalk



5. New boardwalk

In order to enhance the visitor experience, accommodate less able visitors and allow them to experience the creek, it is suggested that a boardwalk to a lookout platform closer to the carpark would be of great benefit to the park.

Much in the same style as the new boardwalk at Babinda Boulders, a boardwalk to a look-out platform immediately inside the gates would allow visitors to experience the creek without the walk up the hill to the falls. This may be an excellent option for those who are pressed for time, or are not as able to make the trek up the hill.

The opportunity to experience the park closer to the entry would have the additional benefit of shorter stays and, therefore, greater turnover in the carpark.

