

PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE	1
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13 JULY 2022	1
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OUR CAIRNS COAST (COASTAL HAZARD ADAPTATION) STRATEGY

Lynne Powell | 8/26/43 | #6958641

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

1. **Endorses the Our Cairns Coast Strategy; and**
2. **Notes that \$60,000 has been received from Q-Coast 2 funding to undertake a CHAS risk assessment of closed landfills.**
3. **Delegates authority to the Chief Executive Officer in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2009* to finalise any and all matters relating to the above.**

INTERESTED PARTIES:

- Ethos Urban
- BMT Group
- LGAQ (QCoast 2100)
- Department of Environment and Science

Note: The identification of interested parties is provided on a best endeavours basis by Council Officers and may not be exhaustive.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Council has developed a plan for coastal hazard adaptation through the Our Cairns Coast Strategy (**the Strategy**).

The Strategy sets the direction and key priority actions for Council, stakeholders and our communities to proactively plan, prepare and respond to coastal hazard risks for the future resilience of the Cairns community. The Strategy comprises a vision, adaptation actions, and location-based adaptation pathways to address coastal hazards from now until 2100, for 14 key coastal localities in Cairns.

A six-week consultation process concluded at the end of August 2021. Feedback on the draft Strategy was positive. There were no significant changes between the draft Strategy and the final Strategy presented for Council endorsement.

Endorsement is sought by Council for the Our Cairns Coast (Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategy).

Recently, Council was successful in securing \$60,000 funding under the Q-Coast 2 program to undertake a coast hazard risk assessment of closed landfills. This is a CHAS implementation action and covers 60% of the project costs.

BACKGROUND:

Cairns Regional Council is one of 31 Queensland coastal councils preparing a long-term Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategy (**CHAS**) under the Queensland Government *QCoast₂₁₀₀ Program*. The program guidelines detail the eight phases (**Figure 1**), that are required to prepare a CHAS, which must be implemented sequentially.



Figure 1: Phases for preparing a CHAS
(Source: *QCoast₂₁₀₀ Minimum Standards and Guideline for Queensland Local Governments*)

Council has undertaken extensive community and stakeholder engagement throughout the project on community values, hazard mapping, identifying and prioritising assets at risk, and on the proposed adaptation options with over 1,200 people engaged to date on the development of the Strategy. Key messages included:

- The need to protect and enhance foreshore areas;
- Maintenance of access to beaches;
- Prioritisation of softer adaptation options;

- Ensuring engineering solutions are well designed (i.e. functional as well as aesthetically pleasing);
- Community concern regarding development in high risk, vulnerable areas
- The use strategic planning and planning controls to manage coast hazard risks;
- Involvement of Traditional Owners;
- Keeping key stakeholders and community informed and involved (hospital, airport and port interested in working in partnership to increase resilience; and
- A need to build community resilience through education.

Council was given the opportunity to apply for funding under Q-Coast 2 to commence implementation activities. Council took up this opportunity because of the coastal location of Council's closed landfills, it is crucial that Council understands the risks to the integrity of the bund walls and can plan for any future rectification works.

COMMENT:

The Strategy sets the direction and key priority actions for Council, stakeholders and our communities to proactively plan, prepare and respond to coastal hazard risks over time.

The Strategy:

- Assesses the risk of coastal hazards including sea level rise, storm tide inundation and erosion to Council, community and stakeholder assets over the short, medium and long term;
- Proposes adaptation measures to mitigate these impacts; and
- Establishes a program of implementation for mitigation measures from now until 2100.

The Strategy comprises:

- Vision, process, engagement and purpose;
- Coastal hazards and risks – including identifying areas and assets at risk;
- Suite of adaptation actions and approaches;
- Decision making adaptation principles;
- Locality based adaptation pathways –short, medium and long term; and
- A high-level strategy implementation plan.

Key elements of the Strategy (provided in **Attachment 1**) are summarised below.

The vision of the Strategy is:

We work together with our communities and nature to adapt to a changing climate. We are leaders in innovation in the management of coastal hazards and thrive in our coastal environments now and in the future.

We will achieve this by:

- *Prioritising our natural environments and their ecosystems and using nature to protect and restore.*

- *Planning for smart solutions and infrastructure in collaboration with partners.*
- *Building a resilient, adaptable and informed community.*
- *Ensuring the future resilience of our economies.*

The Strategy identifies 10 key adaptation approaches based on our adaptation hierarchy and the Council endorsed Principles for Adaptation shown in **Table 1** below.

Table 1: Adaption Approaches

Maintain and improve Priority whole of coast options	Modify	Planned Transition
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitor ▪ Native vegetation and habitat management ▪ Community awareness and education ▪ Emergency response ▪ Planning considerations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Beach and foreshore management ▪ Modify infrastructure and hazard resilient design ▪ Coastal engineering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relocate infrastructure ▪ Accept the risk and embrace coastal processes

A delay has occurred in finalising the Strategy as the Department of Environment and Science (DES) required more detailed socio-economic analysis for potential adaptation options in Cairns City and inner suburbs in order to endorse the Strategy. Council has worked collaboratively with the department and this information has recently been provided to DES through LGAQ and in-principal approval has been given by DES. The in-principal approval has been given on the basis that Cairns can be classed as an 'exceptional' circumstance under the CHAS *QCoast2100 Minimum Standards and Guideline for Queensland Local Governments* due to the difficulties associated with future adaptation options. It acknowledges that detailed options analysis will need to occur as part of implementation phase of the Strategy. This requirement is in the Strategy.

If endorsed, the implementation of the Strategy will be an operational matter for Council. It will involve ensuring that coastal hazards are included within the organisation risk framework, applying for specific project grants and modifying existing BAU processes to take account of coastal hazards into the future. Coastal hazard management is a critical component of climate change adaptation in ensuring that Council's coastline and associated assets remain resilient in the long-term. An implementation plan will be developed and will be aligned with the Climate Change Strategy implementation plan.

OPTIONS:

Option 1: (Recommended)

That Council:

1. Endorses the Our Cairns Coast Strategy; and
2. Notes that \$60,000 has been received from Q-Coast 2 funding to undertake a CHAS risk assessment of closed landfills.
3. Delegates authority to the Chief Executive Officer in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2009* to finalise any and all matters relating to the above.

Option 2:

That Council does not endorse the Our Cairns Coast Strategy.

CONSIDERATIONS:Risk Management:

Council is committed to assisting the local community to understand and address climate risk in partnership with all levels of government, industry and the community. The Strategy aims to help mitigate coastal hazard risk for council and the community through informed, coordinated and timely actions over short, medium and long term to improve the future resilience of the Cairns community.

Council Finance and the Local Economy:

Council secured a commitment of \$500,000 towards preparation of the Strategy under the QCoast2100 program funded by the Queensland Government and administered by the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ), with a contribution from Council's Planning and Environment budget. The final project acquittal from LGAQ can only occur after approval of the Strategy by the Department of Environment and Science.

It is acknowledged that coastal hazard adaptation can be costly and that those costs must be shared by all levels of government, the community and stakeholders. The Strategy has been developed to ensure that investment in adaption is equitable and provides the greatest benefit to the economy, environment and community.

Council has recently received \$60,000 to commence one of the CHAS implementation actions (closed landfill assessment).

Community and Cultural Heritage:

The Strategy assesses the potential risks and adaption options for public and private assets to plan for a more resilient community. Community, industry and traditional custodian groups have been engaged throughout the project.

Natural Environment:

The Strategy identifies the potential impacts of coastal hazards including sea level rise, erosion and storm tide inundation as a result of a changing climate from now until 2100. Community engagement identified natural habitat and wildlife as the top coastal value for the community, with a strong preference for nature-based solutions to addressing coastal hazards. These values have been reflected in the Strategy.

Corporate and Operational Plans:

The Strategy is a key planning document that aligns with the purpose, vision and strategy of the [Cairns Corporate Plan 2021-2026](#). Finalisation of The Strategy is in Council's [Operational Plan 2021-2022](#).

Statutory:

There is no statutory requirement to prepare a CHAS, however consideration of a 0.8m sea level rise by 2100 and the preparation of mapping of coastal hazards is a requirement of the Queensland Government planning framework. The outcomes of the Strategy will be considered as part of the *Towards 2050 Growth Strategy* and inform the new planning scheme.

Policy:

Alignment with policy and plans including, but not limited, to Climate Change Strategy 2030, Local Disaster Management Plan, Corporate Sustainability Policy, Sustainable Building Design Policy, Cairns Plan2016 and Economic Development Strategy.

CONSULTATION

Since commencing the Our Cairns Coast project in 2017, Council has undertaken extensive community, industry and stakeholder engagement and internal input with Councillors, the Project Control Group and Technical working group and received input from over 1,200 people. Outcomes from consultation are summarised above (Background).

Consultation has been continuing with the Department of Environment and Science (DES) and the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) to gain in-principle approval for Phases 7 (socio-economic analysis of preferred options) and Phase 8 (Strategy). DES and the LGAQ have now given in-principle approval of the Strategy. DES will give final approval following Council endorsement of the Strategy.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Our Cairns Coast Strategy ([#6959205](#)) See separate Attachment

L. Powell

Lynne Powell
Coordinator Sustainability and Climate Change

Approved for speed read

Ed Johnson

Ed Johnson
Director Planning, Growth and Sustainability

Attachment 1 - Our Cairns Coast Strategy ([#6959205](#)) See separate Attachment