

COFFS HARBOUR CITY COUNCIL



Message from the Mayor



Denise Knight RN
Mayor, City of Coffs Harbour

Coffs Harbour is truly a lovely corner of paradise. Known for having one of the most liveable climates in Australia, it is also one of only two places on the entire continent where the mountains meet the sea.

Our local government area begins at Bundagen in the south where we border Bellingen Shire Council, goes out westwards as far as Lowanna and north to encompass Barcoongere State Forest above Red Rock.

This has blessed us with a wonderful coastal landscape of unspoilt, sparkling beaches intersected by lush headlands and dotted with towns and villages, all boasting their own very special character.

Offshore, the Solitary Islands Marine Park is a meeting point between two ocean currents that play host to sea life – including many species of whales – that would not normally exist in such close proximity.

Further inland, the landscape becomes a mix of laid-back rural ambience combined with magnificent stretches of world heritage national parks. Coffs Harbour is home to possibly the most numerous species of eucalypts in the entire continent and we have flora and fauna to match, including one of the largest koala populations in NSW.

The people aren't bad either! We really do pride ourselves on being a community of around 73,000 that warmly welcomes all – visitors, newcomers and even those just passing through.

We are home to the largest Sikh population in regional Australia who are part of a much wider, culturally diverse population of more than 50 nationalities. In recent years, we have successfully integrated different waves of former refugees who have happily shared their own traditions while learning about ours and, in doing so, added to the

depth of cultural heritage of the whole community.

The region has also always been home to the Gumbayngirr people, whose dreamtime stories are a fascinating part of local cultural history. The Gumbayngirr country actually extends from the Nambucca River to as far north as the Clarence River and eastward to the ocean, including Coffs Harbour's LGA.

The unique environment and the warm welcome from the community that I've just described have both played a crucial part in our strategic development into one of the best event locations in regional NSW and across Australia.

We have twice won the the globally-acclaimed International Festivals and Events Association (IFEA) World Festival and Event City Award for the quality of the events – both cultural and sporting – that we host.

These events range from the Kennards Hire Rally Australia,

to the many Touch Football and Oz Tag Championships, Coffs Harbour International Buskers and Comedy Festival, Coffs Coast Cycle Challenge, the annual Harmony Festival, Woolgoolga Curryfest and Sawtell Chillii Festival.

Many sports events are attracted to Coffs by the C.ex Coffs International Stadium which is considered one of the best regional sporting locations in the country.

We recently hosted an A-League / W-League double-header which was televised live – thanks to the broadcast quality floodlighting at the ground – and regularly welcome major NRL and AFL games to the city.

We've also got excellent restaurants and cafés, fun attractions, a lively arts scene and a thriving retail sector of boutique and major high street names that always trades well above expectations.

Why not come and visit and see for yourself? I can guarantee you a very, very warm welcome.

New National Still Life Award

Coffs Harbour's Regional Gallery launched a new chapter in the development of its long association with the genre of still life this year with the new National Still Life Award.

The still life genre was proposed for the Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery in 2007 as there was no pre-existing art award in Australia with

this subject. Ten years later, it remains the only award for the still life genre in Australia and attracts entries from all around the country from artists in all stages of their careers.

Building on the foundation established by the Gallery in 2007 with the considerable and valued support of Sydney based business man and

sponsor, Dr. Mal Eutick, the Eutick Memorial Still Life Award (known as EMSLA™) has established Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery as the home of the still life genre.

The National Still Life Award will be open to all art forms, not just painting, encompassing a more contemporary and innovative approach to art making and will become

a biennial exhibition from 2019, alternating with Grafton Regional Gallery's JADA (Jacaranda Acquisitive Drawing Award).

The still life award is a signature event in the cultural calendar of the Coffs Harbour region and has a wide ranging audience demographic from curious community members to avid art lovers.



Laurie Mossuto - Be still, my shopping cart

Coffs Harbour 'Jewel' begins to shine



Before



After

Efforts to put the 'harbour' back into the heart of Coffs Harbour are now well under way after decades of false starts.

The Jetty Foreshores is a focal point for community and visitor recreation and, despite being referred to as the region's 'Jewel in the Crown', the foreshores precinct has historically struggled to make the transformation from its industrial past to a contemporary leisure and visitor destination that meets the needs and expectations of the community and tourist sector.

In 2013, Council began a planning process aimed at revitalising the precinct and providing a far better community recreation experience - and the Jetty4Shores Project (J4S) was born.

With a history of unsuccessful planning attempts by various local, state and federal stakeholders, Council identified the need to achieve strong community consensus as the cornerstone of any revitalisation project.

The J4S project underwent a rigorous planning and consultation phase

which resulted in the project not only achieving community support, but also being awarded the Planning Institute of Australia NSW Award for Planning Excellence for Public Engagement and Community Planning. Nearly 1,350 submissions were received in response to the exhibition of the concept plans alone.

The project was broken down into four stages. Stage 1 was centred around a new, feature Walkway connecting the historic 19th century Jetty to the Jetty Strip dining

quarter. This was completed in October 2015 and has since garnered very positive feedback from visitors and locals alike.

The Walkway itself is a five-metre wide decorative concrete shared pathway/cycleway, which tells the story of our Aboriginal and European heritage, the iconic, heritage-listed Jetty structure and the industrial use of the foreshores.

During construction of Stage 1, Council made an application to the Australian Government's Department of

Infrastructure and Regional Development National Stronger Regions Fund (NSRF) for matching funds to complete Stages 2-4. In December 2015, Council was notified that it had been successful in securing \$4.6m from the NSRF, giving the \$9.2m project the green light.

The following 12 months were dedicated to the development of detailed designs and approvals for the project with key elements of the construction including the construction of a sea wall, wide steps and plaza

area onto Jetty Beach, the construction of an elevated boardwalk connecting the plaza area to the iconic timber Jetty and the development of a community recreation hub with designated market space, performance stage, fitness node, picnic shelters, public amenities and parking.

In April 2017, construction contracts were finalised and the J4S project Stages 2-4 are moving rapidly towards completion, as scheduled, by October 2017 - well ahead of the major tourist season.

Start-up technology is focus

Coffs Harbour City Council places great importance on building healthy economies in order to have healthy communities. For some time, we have been conducting workshops and presentations for local business owners, residents and government and non-government stakeholders to look at and understand the economic needs of our community, now and into the future, and how positive impacts can be strengthened and negative impacts minimised.

This series of workshops and consultations will allow

the development of a redefined and targeted set of priorities for us - at the very least, but hopefully also the broader community - to strengthen the area's economy, focusing on current strengths while being vigilant of future needs and opportunities.

Part of the work carried out by Council's City Prosperity team looks at the attraction and retention of visitors, residents, business, events and investment to the Coffs Coast to allow for the facilitation of opportunities for the right mix of skills and business to devel-

op the Coffs Harbour economy. Earlier in 2017 Council organised and ran an innovative back to Business Week event. Supported by the Department of Industry and bringing together almost 90 local businesses, this event allowed local business to showcase and celebrate their successes, learn from each other through workshops and presentations and understand some of the support opportunities that exist for them in the LGA.

CHCC has also developed and organised the Digital Innovation Challenge

since 2015. This event has assisted innovative technology-based businesses to develop their idea and pitch for feedback and prizes, strengthening Coffs Harbour's reputation as a digital start-up opportunity. Now in its third year, the challenge has expanded to become Start-Up Coffs Coast encouraging start-up businesses of all descriptions to develop their idea, or help existing businesses to start something new. The events in Start-Up Coffs Coast are aimed at enabling connec-

tion with other innovators and mentors, development of ideas and prototypes, validation of business concepts and markets through the peer and expert-judged Pitch Competition, Start-up Alley showcase, Innovation Lab and Keynote Speakers.

These two events are supported by the 6-Degrees Co-working space, which is fully funded by Coffs Harbour City Council. In two locations, this space provides opportunity for sole trader and/or start-up businesses to develop their business and

their ideas while being supported by other like-minded operators and with the convenience of office support. Council, with the local University and TAFE College, also provides support to the Coffs Harbour Innovation Centre, which offers formal lease opportunities for start-up technology businesses as they develop on the Coffs Coast.

Opportunity for digital business is one of the areas that Coffs Harbour has focused on as we look to expand, diversify and strengthen our economy.



Coffs Harbour Airport hits passenger record

Travellers to the Coffs Coast are set to benefit this year with new terminal facilities and a parking apron expansion at Coffs Harbour Airport which is due to be completed by end of June 2017.

The \$6.5m upgrade, funded by the NSW Government's Restart NSW Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund, will include extending both the departure and arrival areas to cater for the increased number of travellers now pass-

ing through the airport. The airport passed the 400,000 passenger mark last year, an all-time record, and will reach 420,000 by the end of this financial year.

Coffs Harbour is serviced by five airlines, QantasLink, Virgin Australia, Tigerair, Fly Corporate and Fly Pelican operating direct flights to Sydney, Melbourne Brisbane and Newcastle.

The expansion will include a dedicated check-in location

for all five airlines, a new Qantas Regional Lounge, a second baggage carousel, additional bathrooms and aircraft parking areas.

On completion, Coffs Harbour Airport will be able to process over 1,000 passengers per hour during peak periods.

Council is confident that the developments will ensure that Coffs Harbour has the infrastructure and services to cater for projected growth for many years to come.



Message from the General Manager

Coffs Harbour's community already enjoys an enviable environment and lifestyle – as the Mayor has outlined in her own Message. Coupled with the environmental attractions are affordable housing, an NBN network, modern medical and hospital facilities, excellent education institutions – including a Southern Cross University campus and a UNSW Rural Clinical School – and easy air and road access to capital cities. It's a perfect place to live and work – and a pretty good place to visit!

The lifestyle and opportunities offered by the city was one of the reasons I was attracted to Coffs Harbour City Council back in 2010, another was its reputation as a leader in local government.

Maintaining that reputation – and helping build the city as a regional economic hub with a strong community – were goals I was keen to set myself and they have remained my focus.

In these challenging days of tighter budgets and cost-shifting, financial sustainability has to be the highest priority. For too long, Coffs Harbour had been running annual deficits in delivering community services. Plus we had a significant shortfall every year in the funds we needed to repair and replace the \$2bn worth of ageing community assets we maintain.

Clearly, this needed to be tackled and so the organisation introduced a series of interlinked strategies.

The most visible – and the most challenging for the or-

ganisation – was a transformational restructure and review of Council's operations. This restructure, which was brought in in 2014, was forecast to make savings of up to \$3.2m per year by 2017/2018, but we actually achieved this target a full 12 months early, plus we are continuing to identify further bankable efficiencies. This is being achieved through the internal development of a tailored continuous improvement program.

In addition, we had also previously secured the NSW Government's agreement to a Special Rate Variation schedule, implemented in 2015, that is set to bring in an extra \$6.2m after three years for community infrastructure maintenance and renewal.

Alongside these strategies, we have implemented a rolling programme of improving asset management to optimise maintenance costs, asset renewals, depreciation and find more efficient ways to deal with the backlog of repairs and replacements.

But one of the most innovative models we adopted was to look at investing in and re-focusing our commercial business units to provide niche solutions for the local government sector.

This approach has been particularly successful with our construction and maintenance division, Coastal Works, and our technology arm, City-Smart Solutions.

As well as bringing in millions of dollars of extra in-

come, they have also provided a direct flow-on to local sub-contractors and suppliers – which has benefited the local economy overall.

I'm pleased to say that, as a result of the changes implemented and with the support of a courageous elected Council, Coffs Harbour City Council was declared to be 'Fit for the Future' by the NSW Government in 2015 following its assessment of the strength and effectiveness of local government throughout the state.

While there are always more and, often, unexpected challenges out there, I feel that Coffs Harbour City Council is facing the future in a robust position based on a platform of confident financial sustainability.



Steve McGrath
General Manager
Coffs Harbour City Council



Laboratory services for the region

This year, Coffs Harbour Laboratory will celebrate 26 years of providing chemical and microbiological analysis to the Coffs Coast community and surrounding areas.

The business began with just one employee and today, has grown to seven employees with positive growth each year.

In 1991 Coffs Harbour City Council recognised the importance of a dedicated Laboratory that would service the region.

As it grew, Council recognised that we needed a robust quality control framework and as a result, formed an interlab group with several lab-

oratories along the east coast of NSW to compare testing methods.

We are proud to have achieved – and still maintain – the highest accreditation by the National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) in Chemical and Microbiology testing.

Today, the Coffs Harbour Laboratory continues to monitor a wide range of water, soil and leachate samples providing high quality analytical results to local councils, government departments, oyster growers, developers, business and private clients.

Premier events destination

The Coffs Coast is a renowned event destination: a boast that can be substantiated by the fact that Coffs Harbour was the International Festival and Event Association's (IFEA) 'World Festival and Event City Award' winner in 2015 and 2016. This award recognises the best in community leadership, festival and event partnerships around the world.

Coffs Harbour City Council is a proud recipient of this award, recognising as it does, the city's outstanding efforts to attract and develop events that can position it on the international stage, deliver strong economic benefits and bring visitors from around the

world to discover this beautiful part of NSW.

Events, both sporting and cultural, play a significant role in attracting large volumes of new and repeat visitors to Coffs Harbour, as well as providing a vibrant backdrop of activity, entertainment, education and well-being for residents of the broader Coffs Community. Events also deliver a large economic benefit to our regional community, providing direct and indirect financial benefits along with increased employment across a number of sectors within the community.

The Coffs Coast Sport and Leisure Park, including C.ex

Coffs International Stadium, is central to many of the sporting events in the LGA – and has contributed hugely to the city being known as the premier regional sporting precinct in NSW. The Stadium is the centrepiece of the precinct and is renowned as one of the best outdoor stadiums in Australia with an elite class playing surface and one of the most valuable and utilised assets on the coast. Council has identified a need to increase capacity at the Stadium. To this end we have developed a strong business case to build an EPIC stadium for the future, including detailed plans, to allow us to make the most of

available funding opportunities.

A look at some of the recent national and international events the city has hosted is ample proof. Spectator events have included games of the Women's International Cricket series, an A-League/W-League Double Header fixture, an AFL pre-season match and a Big Bash league trial game along with various participation sports hosting up to 12,000 participants and spectators.

The FIA World Rally Championship final round is undoubtedly the largest sporting event hosted on the Coffs Coast and showcases the



amazing facilities for participants, officials and spectators. The Coffs Coast provides the rugged, yet beautiful terrain the competitors need, along with the facilities and opportunities that help fans and locals make the most of

this annual event. The WRC championship has a strong connection with the Coffs Coast which will once again welcome the international teams back as the host city for the Australian – and final – round of the 2017 event.



Tourism partnership creates results



The Coffs Coast is widely recognised as a major tourism destination on the east coast of Australia, consistently ranking in the top five destinations visited in NSW (source: Desti-

nation NSW). While Coffs Harbour has long been renowned for its stunning beaches and family attractions, the recent Coffs Coast Tourism Strategic Plan 2020 has a strong fo-

cus on unveiling the natural assets of the coast and hinterland that are part of the Coffs Coast, along with building partnerships between industry, Council and the community.

Our topography enables visitors, within a small radius of Coffs, to be surrounded by the rainforests and waterways of our hinterland, view the coastline vista from the State Forests lookout, or walk amongst kangaroos on a coastal headland.

This emphasis on the natural assets, activities and attractions has been paramount to the success of the

'Create your Paradise' campaign and associated marketing activity. The campaign is headlined by the innovative 'Create Your Paradise' video which highlights the unique natural environment of the area in 60 seconds. The video, made by producers, 'Good Eye Deer' won a prestigious accolade in this year's Australian Video Producers Association Awards and, with associated imagery, was widely broadcast on TV digital and outdoor media throughout NSW, Queensland and Victoria and saw traffic to the destination website increase by 40% during July to November

2016. You can view the video at www.coffscost.com.au

The campaign is a great example of the positive direction created by the recently formed, industry-led Destination Coffs Coast Committee in which Council, the community and the industry all work together. This is paramount to helping grow the visitor economy – thus building of one of our region's most important economic drivers.

A focus of the Coffs Coast Tourism Strategic Plan 2020 has also been on the delivery of Visitor Services within the LGA which has moved away

from the traditional visitor information centre model towards an innovative delivery method.

Through training and accreditation of local businesses, visitor services are now provided in a variety of locations face to face, with phone, electronic and digital support from within Council. This delivery method enables greater accessibility for the visitor, along with a greater representation of the area from local stakeholders. Visitors to the LGA are always surprised by the friendliness and availability of information offered on the Coffs Coast.

Award winning Holiday Park puts customers first

Coffs Harbour City Council, as Corporate Manager of the Coffs Coast State Park, manages four successful Holiday Park businesses that continue to deliver positive outcomes to the wider community by investing back into public facilities at the reserves within the Park.

Already recognised as industry leaders, the holiday parks are set to benefit from \$3.5m in capital investment in the next financial year. The reinvestment of retained

earnings from business operations means that the fully, self-funding businesses will be well-placed to continue to meet the ever-increasing expectations of their customers.

The on-going success of the Holiday Parks is vital in assisting Council to deliver community services and facilities, with profits derived from Holiday Park operations contributing towards the care, control and management of high value community reserves including the Coffs Harbour Jetty Fore-

shores and the North Coast Regional Botanic Garden.

Council is very conscious that reinvestment in the holiday parks is essential in ensuring that the products, services and facilities offered continue to meet customer expectations.

Future-proofing our business operations will guarantee a steady and reliable income stream that, in turn, allows us to deliver and maintain high quality public open spaces and recreational opportunities.



Smart water meter trial

Coffs Harbour City Council's technology business unit, CitySmart Solutions, develops and implements a range of products and services to manage security, cloud-based services, WiFi and wastewater management to many councils in NSW.

It is currently trialling an automatic water meter reader in

several large water-consuming businesses throughout the region that uses the latest Internet of Things (IoT) technology.

In 2016, in a partnership with ThinXtra, Coffs Harbour City Council was announced as the first regional city in Australia to receive full coverage for Internet of Things (IoT).

CitySmart Solutions believes that there are endless benefits to delivering Smart Metering using the latest IoT technology to councils, the community and the environment.

Clients can monitor their daily water consumption and leak detection through water

usage alerts delivered as an SMS to a mobile phone.

Smart Metering is cost-effective to councils as work, health and safety issues are reduced, due to less residential visits, and it provides an opportunity for water billing to occur more frequently – thereby reducing the shock

of excessive water bills to the consumer.

All of CitySmart Solutions' products are trialled and tested within the Coffs Harbour community to ensure they meet industry best practice and standards.

This gives the staff a deep understanding of what coun-

cils and communities need so that smart solutions that increase efficiency, boost productivity, safety and reliability can be tailor-made for each client.

For more information on CitySmart Solutions, take a look at the website - www.city-smartsolutions.com.au

Coastal Works has economic impact

Coastal Works is the construction and maintenance arm of Coffs Harbour City Council. Its primary purpose is to build and maintain the public infrastructure owned by the Coffs Harbour community.

Over the past nine years, Coastal Works has also competed for and won commercial works contracts – primarily with the NSW Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) and other government bodies - totalling more than \$36m. Plus,

the team has also completed a range of projects for local councils in roads, bridges, water and sewer infrastructure.

As well as pouring surplus funds into Council, the projects undertaken by Coastal Works also have a direct flow-on to local sub-contractors and suppliers – which directly and indirectly benefits the whole local economy.

Coastal Works has recently gained the internationally

recognised ISO accreditation in Environment, Safety and Quality Management Systems for civil engineering.

Gaining this accreditation demonstrates the organisation's commitment to providing high quality products and services that will consistently meet the expectations of clients and the community.

As a business unit of Coffs Harbour City Council, Coastal Works is also well aware

of the processes and procedures of local government and the importance of community consultation and engagement. In addition, the team is at the forefront of technological solutions to enhance efficiencies and productivity while delivering quality projects in civil infrastructure.

Take a look at the Coastal Works website for more information – www.coastal-works.com.au

