



Ordinary Council

MAYORAL MINUTES

Business Paper

date of meeting: Wednesday 16 February 2022

location: Council Chambers
17 Burrawan Street
Port Macquarie

time: 5:30pm

Community Vision

A sustainable high quality of life for all

Community Mission

Building the future together
People Place Health Education Technology

Council's Corporate Values

- ★ Sustainability
- ★ Excellence in Service Delivery
- ★ Consultation and Communication
- ★ Openness and Accountability
- ★ Community Advocacy

Community Themes

- ★ Leadership and Governance
- ★ Your Community Life
- ★ Your Business and Industry
- ★ Your Natural and Built Environment

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Wednesday, 16 February 2022

MAYORAL MINUTES

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Item: 07.02

Subject: MAYORAL MINUTE - LAKE CATHIE

Mayor, Peta Pinson

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Note the ongoing and growing community angst at Lake Cathie Lagoon not being mechanically opened by Council for recreation and flooding purposes.**
- 2. Note Item 12.02 Lake Cathie Management, Item 12.06 Lake Cathie Management Strategy and Item 12.11 T-21-26 Hydrodynamic Modelling Update – Lake Innes/Lake Cathie, further to this Mayoral Minute.**
- 3. Request the Chief Executive Officer to make the necessary arrangements for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to meet with the Minister for Lands and Water, The Hon Kevin Anderson MP and the Minister for Environment and Heritage, The Hon James Griffin MP as soon as practicable, to discuss the merits of permanently opening the entrance to the Lake Cathie estuarine system.**
- 4. Request the Chief Executive Officer to prepare detailed briefing papers on Lake Cathie/Lake Innes for presentation to both Minister Anderson and Minister Griffin for their consideration of a permanent opening to the Lake Cathie estuarine system.**
- 5. Note the submissions made by representatives the Department of Primary Industries, Crown Lands, National Parks & Wildlife Services, NSW Fisheries, PMHC staff and also Professor Scott Johnson at the briefing provided to Councillors on 3 February 2022 asking Councillors to consider retaining as much water in the lake as possible to:**
 - a) Prevent further damage caused to the lake system by Acid Sulphate Soils and or another potential Iron Floc outbreak;**
 - b) Prevent fish kills;**
 - c) Consider the needs of recreational & commercial fishers.**
- 6. Note the decision of the Chief Executive Officer to undertake a dry scrape of the berm to 1.6m as the immediate course of action for flood mitigation to relieve issues relating to or potentially relating to infrastructure inundation as required in the short term.**
- 7. Note the overwhelming positive benefits for the Lake Cathie/Lake Innes estuarine systems should the Lake Cathie lagoon interface to be permanently opened to the Ocean.**
- 8. Subsequent to the meeting with both Ministers, request the Chief Executive Officer to bring a report to Council on a potential pathway or otherwise in regard to permanently opening the lake entrance to the Lake Cathie estuarine system.**

Discussion

We know that Lake Cathie is classified as an ICOLL – an intermittently opening and closing lake and lagoon.

We also know that in 1933, Lake Innes was connected to the Lake Cathie Estuarine system where it went from being the largest freshwater lake/swamp environment in coastal NSW to a saline estuarine habitat as a result of the artificial channel opening.

For many decades residents and visitors to Lake Cathie have enjoyed the recreation offered by the Lake Cathie and Lake Innes Estuarine systems. The lagoon which interfaces with the ocean has brought tidal water when the system is open, encouraging swimming, fishing, kayaking, paddle boarding and supports businesses whilst encouraging tourists to the southern part of our region. The community sees an open lagoon as having all the benefits of coastal living and over these decades, Council has opened the lagoon to the ocean for community benefit.

Also during these decades, the area has grown with development occurring around both Lake systems having its own impact. The past few years has seen rapid development occurring in the Lake Cathie and Bonny Hills area of the LGA which is putting further pressure on the water quality of the Lakes.

The only management powers Council currently has is for the mitigation of flooding, stormwater drainage and the maintenance of the foreshore reserves and nearby beaches. The remaining responsibilities for both lake systems are with the State Government.

Community expectation is at an all-time high with residents wanting Council to manage Lake Cathie lagoon with recreation, business and tourism as the main consideration. This view of our community is only expected to increase as the area continues to grow.

We all know the great quote of Albert Einstein “The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results”.

Never has such a quote applied more to our lake systems than that.

This Mayoral Minute is to look at achieving a different result and stop the insanity!

By moving to permanently open Lake Cathie lagoon to the ocean we will deliver a different result and in my opinion satisfy our community expectations whilst satisfying the requirements of our State Government stakeholders.

The benefits are many:

- Healthy and abundant marine life
- Boating
- Recreation
- Tourism
- Economic driver for region
- Negates the need to decouple Lake Innes and Lake Cathie from each other which provides protection of our current commercial fishing industry
- Preservation of Coastal wetlands adjacent to land which the State Government has just committed to purchasing at Lake Innes for Koala conservation. Wetlands are also important for filtering chemicals and sediment out of water before it is discharged into the ocean.
- Acid sulphate soils and future iron flock will be suppressed by keeping water levels high in Lake Innes

- Provides future Drought mitigation
- Endangered Salt Marsh will be protected
- Water Quality improved
- Flooding risks reduced
- Reduces current pressure on Council to replace Kenwood Drive Bridge for tidal flow purposes
- Reduce public health threats from Mosquito diseases such as Ross River Fever and Barmah Forest virus during times of high rainfall and flooding

These benefits are to name a few and I am certain there are others, but the greatest benefit will be to our community and the management of the two Lake systems has been the number one issue for many in the southern region.

Whilst there is no doubt much work to do and discussions to have to bring a permanent opening about, we must still press on with a dual cohesive strategy on improved lake management via the current Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP) and the future Coastal Management Program (CMP).

Attachments

Nil