

New council focused on task ahead

After an exhausting election campaign, successful candidates have had a busy time in preparation for their four-year term of representing our vast region

THEY have been elected, sworn in, fully briefed and are now busily tackling the business of local government decision-making.

The new Mackay Regional Council will hold its first ordinary meeting today (Wednesday, April 27).

Mayor Greg Williamson said it had been an extremely busy three weeks since he and councillors were sworn in and attended the first statutory meeting of the new council three weeks ago.

"Since then councillors have been fully briefed on the organisation and many of the issues," Cr Williamson said.

"Seven of the 10 councillors and myself are new to council this term, so the briefings have been extensive," he said.

Cr Williamson said Mackay residents had voted for change and the new council had already implemented changes.

"Previously, there was a portfolio system, with a councillor responsible for each portfolio," he said.

"They are gone and have been replaced with four standing committees, which each has a chair, deputy chair and councillor representatives."

The standing committees, including their chairs, were established at the statutory meeting three weeks ago, which also elected Deputy Mayor Amanda Camm.

Some minor changes to the make-up of the committees will be resolved at today's ordinary meeting and those committees will then start meeting from May 11.

Cr Williamson said the standing committees would provide the public with more access to the decision-making of council.

"That is part of our commitment to reconnect with the community," he said.



Deputy Mayor Amanda Camm (standing) addresses the first statutory meeting of council. Around the table in the Council Chambers are (from left) councillors Justin Englert, Ayril Paton, Laurence Bonaventura, Karen May, executive support officer Madonna Iliffe, CEO Craig Doyle, Mayor Greg Williamson and councillors Ross Walker, Fran Fordham, Martin Bella, Kevin Casey and Ross Gee.

"These committees have full decision-making powers for their areas of council and the public can attend the meetings. The community throughout the entire region

can also expect to see more of their elected representatives.

"Elected members have to be out there in the community a lot more and that's what

we'll do with the council and community program.

"It is about delivering the region back into the regional council."

Elected representatives 'locals'

THE new elected Mackay Regional Council is "truly local".

Mayor Greg Williamson and nearly all of the 10 other councillors were raised in the Mackay region.

The exception is Cr Karen May, who grew up in Rockhampton, but she is synonymous with Sarina, where she is a former mayor.

"In this day and age, that is a little unusual for a major provincial local government area," said Cr Williamson.

"I am sure it will work in Mackay's favour though as the elected representatives have a thorough understanding of issues, some of them long-standing, throughout the entire region," he said.

"Interestingly, where the councillors grew up and live now covers a good cross section of the region.

"They are well-known and are already heavily involved in the community, particularly in their own areas.

"Mackay Regional Council is undivided and does not have formal divisions. But we will be making councillors contacts for different parts of the region as part of our focus on providing good representation for the entire community.

"Once that is finalised a map showing which councillors are the main contacts for what areas will be on our website, along with contact details."

Cr Williamson said councillors had already been out and about at many meetings and functions.

"We had our first Citizenship Ceremony of the new term of council a couple of weeks ago at the MECC.

"Councillors also attended a meeting



Mayor Greg Williamson with new citizen Phuong Nguyen, of Vietnam.

with Fourways business owners to discuss plans to mitigate flooding in that area.

"As is tradition, councillors also attended Anzac Day services throughout the region on Monday."

>> More details on the new Mackay Regional Council can be found online at mackay.qld.gov.au. Anyone with a query relating to council should check the website. If they can't find the information, residents can call 1300 MACKAY (622 529) to lodge a customer request.

New meeting cycle means more access

COUNCIL'S four new standing committees will provide the community with more access to meetings. The committees will meet on the second and third Wednesdays of each month, with two committee meetings per day.

The first will be held at 9am, with the second at 1pm. An ordinary meeting will also be held on the fourth Wednesday of each month.

Some council decisions will be reserved for the ordinary meeting. However, each of the standing committees have the power to make final decisions relating to the items, issues and areas they deal with.

Members of the public are able to attend any of the meetings to watch the robust decision-making of council in action.

Standing Committee Meetings schedule for 2016:

- **Infrastructure and Services Committee** will meet on the second Wednesday of each month at 9am, beginning on May 11.
- **Economic Development and Planning Committee** will meet on the second Wednesday of each month at 1pm, beginning on May 11.
- **Community Engagement Committee** will meet on the third Wednesday of each month at 9am, beginning on May 18.
- **Corporate Services Committee** will meet on the third Wednesday of each month at 1pm, beginning on May 18.

Council Ordinary Meeting schedule for 2016:

- Council will hold an ordinary meeting on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 10am, beginning today (April 27).

For more details on meetings, including agendas, visit council's website: mackay.qld.gov.au

Mayor returns to top job



A fifth generation Mackay local, Mayor Greg Williamson has a genuine enthusiasm for the region.

He has returned to the top job, having been mayor of the then Mackay City Council from 1991

to 1994 prior to amalgamation with the former Pioneer Shire Council.

Since then he has gained vast management experience in large businesses and brings that skillset back to the role.

Cr Williamson has a long history of service to the community, ranging from Rotary to the then Small Business Association and Mackay Tourism, and more than 35 years of service with the Australian Air Force Cadets.

Mayor Williamson is committed to transparency and his new council has established four standing committees to replace the previous portfolio system.

As mayor, Cr Williamson is required by law to be a member of all four of council's standing committees.

Seven new faces but team of councillors united in resolve to reconnect with community



Deputy Mayor Amanda Camm has a strong background in economic development, having previously been Deputy CEO

of the former Regional Economic Development Corporation. She brings those skills to her new role, which also includes chair of council's Economic Development and Planning Committee. Having grown up on a cane farm in Playstowe, Cr Camm's previous jobs have ranged from sugar chemist and travel consultant to cane farmer and CQ fundraising coordinator for the Mater Foundation. She's also held executive roles on a range of not-for-profit and community organisations. Cr Camm has previously worked for Mackay Regional Council, including time as Community and Client Services acting director, so she has a thorough understanding of the organisation.

Committees:

- Infrastructure and Services (chair)
- Economic Development & Planning (chair)
- Community Engagement



Cr Karen May has 12 years of local government experience. She was a councillor, deputy mayor and mayor of Sarina Shire Council.

As mayor, she led the Sarina council through its amalgamation with Mackay City and Mirani Shire councils in 2008. Cr May was then elected to the newly amalgamated Mackay council, serving until 2012. Not a part of the last term of council, she built on her business, hospitality and community experience during that time, operating businesses in Sarina. Prior to being elected to the current council, she was managing Sarina RSL Club. Cr May's previous local government experience stands her in good stead for committee chair and deputy chair roles on the new council.

Committees:

- Infrastructure and Services (chair)
- Economic Development & Planning (deputy chair)
- Corporate Services (deputy chair)



Cr Kevin Casey's local government experience is one of the greatest strengths he brings to the current council. This is his fourth term of

council, having been first elected to the then Mackay City Council in 2004. Cr Casey was deputy mayor of the previous council and was responsible for the Roads and Drainage portfolio. He is chair of the Community Engagement and deputy chair of the Infrastructure and Services committees on the current council. Prior to joining council, Cr Casey, a fourth generation Mackay local, operated his own electronics business for 18 years. He has also been active in the community, with roles ranging from patron and life member of Mackay Hockey and Mackay Surf Life Saving Club to member of Rotary and the Road Accident Action Group (RAAG).

Committees:

- Community Engagement (chair)
- Infrastructure and Services (deputy chair)



This is **Cr Ross Walker's** third term on council. First elected at a by-election in 2010, he was re-elected in 2012 and again in

2016. In his first two terms he was responsible for the Parks, Environment and Sustainability portfolio and then the Finance, Asset Management and IT portfolio. That experience will come to the fore in his roles as Corporate Services Committee chair and Infrastructure and Services Committee member. A cane farmer for 35 years, Cr Walker was chairman of the Australian Cane Farmers Association and chairman of a diverse retail company before joining council. He has been a dedicated member of Mackay West Rotary Club for more than 25 years and in 2003 was honoured with a Paul Harris Fellow award from Rotary for exceptional service to the sugar industry.

Committees:

- Corporate Services (chair)
- Infrastructure and Services



Cr Laurence Bonaventura is serving his second term on council. He currently holds the position of deputy chair of the Community Engagement

Committee. During his first term, he held the Waste, Health and Regulatory Services portfolio. Cr Bonaventura was raised in picturesque Habana and remains a resident there today. His entire working life before local government had been in sugar cane farming, earthmoving and construction. Cr Bonaventura also has an extensive history of involvement in the community, ranging from Habana and District Progress Association to St Vincent de Paul. He has a passion for bringing people together and rallying behind worthy causes.

Committees:

- Community Engagement (deputy chair)
- Infrastructure and Services



Cr Fran Fordham is well versed in the operations of Mackay Regional Council. She worked for council in its finance department

before being elected as a councillor. With that background, she has a keen interest in rates affordability, sustainable growth, sustainable employment opportunities and community consultation and engagement. Prior to being employed by council, she worked in real estate sales and property management, as well as in the Finch Hatton-based business her family previously owned. Cr Fordham has done a variety of volunteer work for organisations, ranging from Red Cross Blood Bank to St Pauls Drop-In Centre. Raised in the Pioneer Valley, she now lives in Andergrove.

Committees:

- Economic Development & Planning
- Community Engagement



Although this is **Cr Justin Englert's** first term as a councillor, he brings a thorough understanding of the workings of council to the role.

He was previously been local controller for the State Emergency Service (SES). Before that, his working life was varied, ranging from jobs as a labourer, scaffolder, sandblaster and spray painter to avionics fitter with the Air Force, an electrician and business manager. Much of his community involvement has been through the SES as a volunteer trainer and responder, co-founder and facilitator of the PCYC Emergency Service Cadets in Mackay and co-founder of the SES Association of Queensland. Growing up in Beaconsfield and still living in North Mackay, Cr Englert brings that strong community-minded focus to his new role.

Committees:

- Economic Development & Planning
- Community Engagement



Cr Ross Gee, serving his first term on council, is an award-winning builder with more than 20 years' experience. He wants to bring the skills

of running his own business, including a track record of finishing projects on time and on budget, to his new role as a councillor. Cr Gee is proud of his leadership qualities, honed by roles ranging from school vice-captain at Pioneer State High School to captain of Eimeo Surf Life Saving Club. His community involvement has ranged from junior netball and rugby league coach to founder of the Mackay Together Buyers Group. Raised in Eimeo, Blacks Beach and Mackay, Cr Gee lives at the Northern Beaches.

Committees:

- Economic Development & Planning
- Community Engagement



Cr Martin Bella, who was raised in Sarina, is well known through his exploits on the sporting field. A professional rugby league player from 1983 to

1997, including representing Queensland in State of Origin and Australia, he is well versed in teamwork and leadership. But the skills he brings to his new role as a councillor are much more diverse. Cr Bella's career has included a vast range of roles, including cane farming, grazier, mining, retail agricultural sales, construction and maintenance, sales, hospitality and transport and freight. He is a physiotherapist and has owned and operated his own practice in Anzac Street, Sarina.

Committees:

- Infrastructure and Services
- Corporate Services



Cr Ayril Paton brings a range of rural and mining experience to his first term on Mackay Regional Council. Beginning his working

life has an apprentice fitter at Racecourse mill, he's held a range of jobs since then, ranging from managing workshops to being a shift supervisor at Carborough Downs Coal Handling and Preparation Plant (CHPP). He's also been a farm manager. Raised in the Homebush and Chelona areas, Cr Paton is based at Munbura and the family farm at Racecourse. He is an advocate of a "fair go" for all residents of the Mackay Regional Council area.

Committees:

- Infrastructure and Services
- Corporate Services



Council meetings are open to the public. All ordinary and standing committee meetings are held in the Gordon Street Council Chambers. To view a schedule of future meetings, visit mackay.qld.gov.au