



# Office of Mayor and CEO

Annual Review

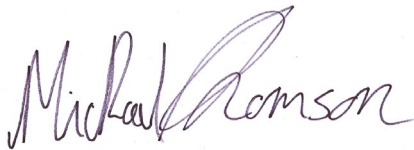
Period - June 2019 to July 2020

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## OVERVIEW

This report is for the Office of the Mayor and CEO Annual Review.

- The safety of our staff, the community and contractors Safety continues to be the highest priority for officers. For the 2019-20 year, six lost time injuries have been recorded and a total of 363 days have been lost. Statistics and graphs will not be included in this annual summary report as they were comprehensively reported on within the June report.
- 2019-20 will be remembered for the major impact of the COVID-19 pandemic impact. Not only did it have a major impact on Council operations for the second half of the year, but also came at a major cost for 2019-20, and leading to a \$5M deficit Budget being adopted for 2020-21.
- Although undertaken successfully, the 2020 local government elections were also impacted by COVID-19, as have Council meetings which have been held from the MECC.
- Council was the beneficiary of significant external funding, with over \$30M actually received within the 2019/20 year.
- Despite the challenges of 2019-20, staff continued to deliver the core Council functions and services, and major projects continued. Details of these will be contained within the various Departmental summary reports.



## PROJECTS/INITIATIVES

### Council Election

March 2020 saw the holding of the quadrennial local government elections in Queensland, with elections being conducted by the Electoral Commission of Queensland (ECQ).

The impacts of COVID-19 saw a potential delay in the elections, however under controlled and restricted conditions the elections proceeded. Some changes saw candidates unable to stand at polling booths, or hand out how to vote cards. Also, promotion of postal voting, and extended pre-poll, was offered to reduce queuing.

The election saw Mayor Greg Williamson elected unopposed (declared on 30 March 2020), and the resultant Councillors confirmed on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2020 by the declaration of the poll.

The formal swearing in ceremony was conducted on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020, albeit under social distancing restrictions and with only the CEO, Mayor and Councillor involved. This was different to the larger event including families and media, however, was undertaken successfully.



### Councillor Inductions

COVID-19 caused some challenges for what would be the standard Councillor induction process, including some presentations being provided remotely by videoconference. However, all required sessions were undertaken.

### Council Meetings

Following the Post-Election statutory meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020, Council meetings followed the standing cycle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays of the month.

However, COVID-19 has also impacted Council meetings. For the first time in the history of the Mackay Regional Council, Council meetings were held outside the Mackay Council Chambers. The MECC was utilised to allow correct distancing.

The State Government also amended legislation to enable Council's to exclude the public for participating due to meeting numbers etc, with Mackay electing to invoke such an exclusion. However, the public is still able to participate in meetings by viewing the live-streaming which is being recorded for each meeting.

Whilst Council meetings and briefing sessions continue, Council in Community days have not been held from March-June due to restrictions.



### **Qantas Pilot Training Academy**

In July 2019 Qantas announced Mackay as the site for the second pilot training academy for Australia (with Toowoomba having been previously announced).

The announcement was the culmination of significant work from both Council and the Mackay Airport. It was also on the back of a community campaign, co-ordinated via GW3, showing the significant support of the Mackay Community.

Since the announcement general discussions continued, noting the focus of Qantas on having the Toowoomba site operational first.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the whole aviation industry, including Qantas, Therefore as expected the focus of Qantas has been on operational and business matters generally, and not focused on business expansion such as the pilot training academy.

Council awaits further advice from Qantas, again noting their expected focus on general business.

### **Enterprise Agreement (EA)**

Council's current EA was to expire 30 June 2020. Negotiations commenced late 2019 and through early 2020, with a view to having a negotiated agreement in place prior to 30 June.

Negotiations were going well, however as with many projects COVID-19 had a major impact. Council advised that negotiations were proposed to be placed on hold pending the final impacts of COVID-19. Regular meetings continue to negotiate non-monetary aspects of the agreement, pending the final economic outcomes of COVID-19.

### **Funding**

Council has been the beneficiary of significant external grant funding with a total of \$30,354,734 received during 2019/20.

Major individual funding included –

- Financial Assistance Grant 2019/20 - \$3,042,131
- Financial Assistance Grant 2020/21 - \$3,235,793
- Roads to Recovery 2019-2024 - \$1,956,590
- Jobs and Regional Growth Fund (Resources Centre of Excellence) - \$3,600,000
- Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme (Milton/Boundary) - \$1,092,502
- Sever Tropical Cyclone Debbie (Queens Park) - \$5,286,990

It should be noted that these are only monies actually received during 2019/20, with the Works for Queensland (W4Q) major funding of Round 3 (\$9,980,000), and COVID-19 (\$6,930,000) applicable but received outside this timeframe.

## LEGAL SERVICES

### **Overview**

Financial year 2019-20 was a transformative year for the Legal Services Program. Several important initiatives and operational improvements were undertaken or implemented, including:

- 'Lex' practice management software was procured and trialled in late 2019 – early 2020, and successfully rolled-out to the Program in February 2020. Full operational use commenced March 2020;
- Matter in-take processes reviewed as part of new practice management program roll-out, and all new matters are now assessed and graded in terms of strategic alignment and operational importance, ensuring more important or more strategic matters are able to be prioritised and dealt with in-house as appropriate.

Typically, internal team advise and are actively involved in all matters, with external advice and representation sought in highly complex or specialised matters, or where there are operational elements best suited to an external provider (e.g. conveyancing).



- Presently 71% of strategic matters are dealt with completely internally, 90% if conveyancing and in-Court matters are excluded;
- Presently 72% of high-importance matters are dealt with completely internally, 85% if conveyancing and in-Court matters are excluded;
- The Legal Services Program has actively engaged with the broader business, and developed closer, and more effective relationships with stakeholders across all Directorates. Being closely aligned to the business, and understanding the broader operations, the Program is able to deliver tangible and intangible benefits that go beyond mere cost offset or external spend reduction and assists MRC to operate more efficiently and effectively. Early engagement identifying and addressing issues before they become a problem helps to reduce the number of complex problems arising at a later stage.

Initiatives include:

- Attendance at tool-box talks with water network, civil operations and design teams;
- Provision of targeted training and development through individual and group discussions with staff in the areas of planning, property, workplace (IR) law, construction, regulatory services and governance;
- Engagement with managers regarding projects to respond to larger perceived gaps or operational problems that go beyond any one particular matter. Highlights include:
  - Removal of land acquisition notices;
  - Early engagement with local law officers (dangerous dog warrants, cutting locks for entry regarding overgrown allotments);
  - Review of MECC & Events contract pro-forma documents;
  - Indigenous land use (Native Title, ILUA, indigenous cultural heritage); &
  - Currently drafting a Prosecution policy.
- Ongoing engagement has led to an increase in work volumes from across all MRC areas. Any given day could see a request to respond to a million dollar dispute claim, a request for a warrant to seize a dangerous dog, a review of a proposed contract term or advice regarding an employee disciplinary matter along with a review of a Council policy or local law.
- A total of 268 matters were opened in Lex during the period 1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020. On average, 19 new matters were opened per month for the period 1 July 2019 – 31 December 2019, with two months where 20 or more were opened. That average grew to 25 new matters opened per month for the period 1 January 2020 – 30 June 2020, with only one month with 20 or fewer matters opened;
- The Legal Services Program aims to be a trusted advisor to the Management Team and MRC Officers more generally.

## GREATER WHITSUNDAY COUNCILS OF MAYORS (GWCoM'S)

### 3.1. Greater Whitsunday Council of Mayors (GWCoM's) – formerly Whitsunday Regional Organisation of Councils (WROC)

Joint group in conjunction with the Councils of Isaac and Whitsunday.

Membership involves the Mayor and CEO of each of the three (3) Councils, supported by various staff.

A CEO's Group has been established as part of the GWCoM's. The intent of this group is to handle the 'business' matters and look for possible synergies between Councils at CEO level and allowing focus on higher level and strategic issues for the region by the wider group.

The below is a summary of the activities for the 2019/20 year

#### Meetings

The following meetings were held of the GWCoM's –

- 14 August 2019 – Whitsunday
- 20 September 2019 – Videoconf
- 17 October 2019 – Mackay
- 21 November 2019 – Mackay
- 20 February 2020 – Mackay
- 30 April 2020 – Videoconf
- 11 June 2020 – Mackay

COVID-19 saw the April meeting held by videoconf. Also, usually one meeting per year is held in each of Isaac and Whitsunday, however the meeting planned for Isaac needed to be changed to Mackay in the lead-up due to travel issues.

#### Members

For the year the three (3) Mayors remained the same, and had the unique occurrence of each being returned unopposed at the March elections

Representatives for the period included –

#### Whitsunday

- Mayor – Andrew Willcox
- CEO - Kenn Donohoe – August 2019 to March 2020
- CEO - Rod Ferguson – June 2020

#### Isaac

- Mayor – Anne Baker
- CEO - Gary Stevenson



## Mackay

- Mayor – Greg Williamson
- CEO – Craig Doyle

Mayor Anne Baker was the GWCoM's Chair until the April 2020 meeting, when Mayor Andrew Willcox was appointed.

Mayor Andrew Willcox also took over the role of LGAQ Policy Executive District representative from Mayor Baker.

Mayor Greg Williamson was the GWCoM's representative on the Greater Whitsunday Alliance (GW3) for the whole 2019/20 period

## **Meeting Attendees**

Regular meeting attendees during the years included-

- LGAQ
- GW3
- Department of State Development, Manufacturing , Infrastructure and Planning (DSDMIP)
- Regional Development Australia Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday Inc (RDA)
- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Regional Social Development Coalition (RSDC)

Other key attendees also included –

- Urannah Dam
- Queensland Resources Council

## **Major Initiatives**

Major initiatives for the year included –

- Funding agreement completed with GW3
- Funding agreement completed with RSDC
- Whitsunday Isaac Mackay (WIM) Alliance – Water alliance between 3 Councils
- Regional Waste Management Working Group – Waste working group between 3 Councils
- Regional Deal – Resulting in Transformation Region document highlighting key projects for post COVID-19 recovery