

Meet your new council

The Mayor and 10 councillors have been elected and have started work.

COVID-19 social distancing requirements meant it was a very different swearing-in ceremony. Councillors were sworn in one-by-one in the Council Chambers, with no family or friends able to attend, on April 22.

Six councillors from last term have returned:

- Mayor Greg Williamson
- Deputy Mayor Karen May
- Cr Martin Bella
- Cr Laurence Bonaventura
- Cr Justin Englert
- Cr Fran Mann.

They are joined by:

- Cr Michelle Green
- Cr Belinda Hassan
- Cr Alison Jones
- Cr Russell Seymour
- Cr Pauline Townsend.

For full bios and contact details for your councillors, head to mackay.qld.gov.au/councillors



Mayor Greg Williamson

A fifth generation local, Mayor Williamson was re-elected unopposed at the 2020 local government elections. Following that first stint in the top job in the early 90s, he gained vast management experience in large businesses and brought that skillset back to the mayoralty. Mayor 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.



Deputy Mayor Karen May

Cr Karen May's vast local government experience, which totals more than 16 years, will hold her in good stead for her role as Deputy Mayor in the current council. The most experienced councillor on council, she was a councillor, deputy mayor and mayor of the former Sarina Shire Council. As mayor, she led Sarina through amalgamation with Mackay City and Mirani Shire councils in 2008. She is a strong advocate for issues in our region and played a leading role in recovery from Cyclone Debbie and bushfires.



Cr Martin Bella

Cr Martin Bella is serving his second term on council, having been re-elected in 2020. During his first term from 2016-2020, he earned a reputation for being straight-talking and a strong voice for rural landholders. He is especially a key advocate for residents in the southern part of our region. A former Queensland State of Origin and Australian representative in rugby league, he's tackled his role as a councillor with plenty of passion. His expertise in sugar and beef provides council with a good insight into these industries.



Cr Laurence Bonaventura

Cr Laurence Bonaventura, who is serving his third term on council, has plenty of experience when it comes to our waste facilities and initiatives. Cr Bonaventura's rural experience is also wide ranging. Raised at Habana and still 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.



Cr Justin Englert

Cr Justin Englert, serving his second term on council, has a passion for the regional economy, including tourism. He's council's representative on the Mackay Tourism board. During his first term in 2016-2020, he was a key advocate for a mountain biking project planned for the upper-Pioneer Valley. Cr Englert was previously the local controller for the State Emergency Service (SES). He holds three trade qualifications, including industrial protective coatings, avionics fitter with the Royal Australian Air Force and electrician.



Cr Michelle Green

This is Cr Michelle Green's first term as a councillor on Mackay Regional Council but her second foray into local government. Her passion for local government began in 2016 when elected as a councillor for Muswellbrook Shire Council in the Upper Hunter Valley. She and her husband are Mackay born and raised and after travelling extensively have returned to the region to raise their children. Cr Green is a qualified exercise physiologist and has a passion for active living. She has extensive experience in the METS sector, having been a past winner of Operator of the Year in the Queensland Women in Mining Awards.



Cr Belinda Hassan

Cr Belinda Hassan is a fifth-generation Mackay region local with a proven passion for supporting the community through both her professional work and volunteer efforts. The former manager of Mackay Funerals and Sarina Funerals is also committed to several community organisations, including Samaritan House Women's Domestic Violence Shelter, Zonta Club of Mackay and the Domestic Violence Resource Service/Mackay Women's Centre. She is a member and past-president of the Sarina Lions Club.



Cr Alison Jones

This is Cr Alison Jones' third term on council, with her first local government experience dating back 16 years. Cr Jones has lived in Mackay for 40 years and has had a diverse career, including as a licensed excavator, forklift operator, stevedore and meat work supervisor and registered trainer. She has driven trucks at the mines and managed a drug and alcohol testing company. Since 2016, she spent time working in the NDIS sector advocating for people with disabilities. She also has more than 20 years of volunteer experience in various groups.



Cr Fran Mann

Cr Fran Mann, a second-term councillor, has a passion for the region's heritage and history. She is chair of the Character and Heritage Advisory Committee, as well as a council representative on the Combined Museums Committee. Cr Mann has a strong understanding of council operations as she worked in the finance program for more than nine years prior to being elected as a councillor in 2016. Prior to joining council as an employee, she had experience in a diverse range of industries and held roles in retail and real estate.



Cr Russell Seymour

Cr Russell Seymour, a builder by trade, is serving his first term on Mackay Regional Council. Born and raised in the Pioneer Valley, he's operated his building business for more than 30 years. He decided he wanted a break from the building industry to focus on giving back to the community. Cr Seymour entered council to be a voice of the people, especially rural communities, and has pledged to be a "plain speaker". He's keen to promote the region's tourism industry, advocate for our local building industry, improve our roads and revitalise the Mackay City Centre.



Cr Pauline Townsend

Cr Pauline Townsend, who is serving her first term on council, has strong connections with the business community. Much of her early career was in recruitment for the long-term unemployed. With additional experience in administration, sales and business development roles, including working with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland, she started her own small business consulting firm eight years ago. She's also well-known through her volunteer and fundraising efforts.

Water use cut

THE Mackay Natural Environment Centre (MNEC) is leading the way when it comes to sustainable water use. Nursery and Garden Industry Queensland have officially recognised upgrades to MNEC's sprinkler layout as being best management practice (BMP). Because of the upgrades, staff have been able to increase the growing area by 73 per cent, while also decreasing water use per hectare by 37 per cent annually.

City Centre news

THE current restrictions have changed the way businesses in the Mackay City Centre operate. In response, those businesses have come up with innovative and creative ways of trading during restrictions. The Mackay City Centre's website now has a detailed list of how businesses have adapted to the changing times. Head to mackaycitycentre.com.au for details.

Water bills

WATER bills will begin trickling into mail boxes from next week. The billing period, from September to February, covers what is traditionally the driest time of year for our region. One way to monitor water usage and be alerted to any potential leaks is to register on council's free myh2o website at myh2o.qld.gov.au. All water notices are due on June 17.

Trail closed

THE Bluewater Trail will be partially closed from early May until mid-June to undertake necessary bridge repair works. The repair works will take place between Ron Camm Bridge and Caneland Shopping Centre at the Alligator Creek Bridge. Cyclists and pedestrians are asked to seek alternative routes during this time. For the safety of all users, please obey the directions of traffic control and any signage.

> Survey under way to understand impact of virus

AN independent COVID-19 Community Pulse Survey is about to begin to assess the impact of Coronavirus and its social distancing restrictions on the Mackay community. The survey will include a random phone poll of residents, as well as the option for people to respond online. It will be undertaken by IRIS Research on behalf of council.

Mayor Greg Williamson said council was aware there had been major impacts on Mackay region residents

due to the Coronavirus pandemic and associated restrictions.

"But much of the information council and the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) had to date was anecdotal," he said.

"This comprehensive survey will provide us with much clearer data to help assist the community during recovery from the pandemic and the associated economic crisis it has created."

Cr Williamson said other surveys conducted in the region to date had focused on the economic impact of businesses. He said this survey, which would take about seven minutes to complete, would focus more on households.

"There will be a range of questions which will provide a clearer picture of the economic impact on residents in our community.

"The survey will also cover impacts on health, both

physical and mental, as well as social impacts. It will provide a snapshot of residents' immediate and future concerns."

IRIS Research will be calling Mackay mobile phones and landlines to conduct the phone survey. The callers will clearly identify that they are calling from IRIS Research on behalf of Mackay Regional Council.

Anyone wanting to complete the survey online will also be able to do so at mackay.qld.gov.au

