

SAVE OUR FORESHORE INC.

P O Box 59, Airlie Beach QLD 4802 Tel: 0419 768 195
saveourforeshore@whitsunday.net.au
www.saveourforeshore.com.au

Mayor Andrew Willcox
Whitsunday Regional Council
52 Main Street
Proserpine QLD 4800

6 November 2017

By Email: info@whitsundayrc.qld.gov.au

Re: Submission Shute Harbour public jetty restoration

Dear Mayor Willcox,

Thank you for asking the community for submissions on the future of the Shute Harbour jetty and public wharf. Save Our Foreshore asked for and received feedback from members and supporters.

*Background: **Council seeking community's long-term vision for Shute Harbour:** 'Before major restoration works take place over the next year, Council would like to know what the community feels is important for the future of Shute Harbour.... "By future-proofing the facility, we can make sure we budget appropriately for any upcoming development at Shute Harbour."*

Our interest in Shute is both as a public facility and also that there are sections of public foreshore land/reserves around the Shute Harbour jetty area.

We are all very aware that our mainland region needs new and different tourism attractions to keep people in town for longer. Often visitors ask: 'Apart from going out to the islands, what is there to do here?'

Shute Harbour owes its existence to its proximity to the islands. It is the closest departure point. For a while, Shute Harbour was touted as the 'second busiest passenger terminal in Australia, after Sydney Harbour'. However, its reason to exist as a passenger terminal ended with the development of Port of Airlie and the relocation of the passenger terminal and the majority of island ferry services. A number of marine tourism businesses still operate from the Council facility.

QTIC Chief Executive Daniel Gschwind said recently one of the key priorities the tourism industry is advocating for is a focused investment in building the competitiveness of our destinations. "Tourism needs the infrastructure and it needs the marketing but it also needs an industry that has the capability and capacity to drive innovation and create market-leading experiences. We need an investment in industry-led, capacity building programs that can assist Queensland's 53,100 tourism businesses to be globally competitive and capitalise on the forecast growth." Mr Gschwind said growth in global tourism is on track to grow at twice the rate of the rest of economy over the coming decade. "We must put Queensland in the best possible position to make the most of this opportunity. Already more than 225,000 Queenslanders work in tourism and many more jobs can be created right across our state through capacity building programs. Now is the time for the business sector and governments at all levels to focus and collaborate on the growing momentum of the tourism industry

We also note that there is a consistent feedback theme that the Shute jetty would be a good location for a marine educational/tourism facility of some kind. A member submitted as an example, the new private marine aquarium in Cairns – see extract below from their website. This is the kind of facility that would add another layer to the Whitsunday experience, whether for tourism or locals. And is compatible with its surroundings.

"The Cairns Aquarium has been developed to provide a world class venue for seeing and interacting with the incredible plants, animals, and habitats found only in Australia's Wet Tropics, a region which borders two World Heritage listed environments: The Daintree Rainforest and The Great Barrier Reef. Protecting and conserving the biodiversity of these World Heritage listed ecosystems is the vision and the overriding passion of our founders Daniel Leipnik and Andrew Preston and this commitment underpins our business philosophy and team culture"

If Airlie Beach and Cannonvale contain the heavily developed residential and tourism footprint, Shute Harbour offers people the alternative, a relatively undeveloped experience surrounded by marine and terrestrial national parks. Sensitive and appropriate development without the impacts of mass tourism can benefit both visitors and locals seeking a variety of experiences.

We offer the following suggestions submitted by members and supporters:

- People are generally very supportive of some sort of marine facility that would encompass research, education and tourism. Although the concept would most likely need state or federal input, council could be the initiator and driving force and it should not be rejected out of hand. Successfully achieved this would be of great commercial benefit to the region and could become a major national tourism attraction.

- A concept that sees the Shute Harbour foreshore area developed as a tourism-based citizen science venture (possibly developed in consultation with AIMS, JCU and GBRMPA). This would be an 'Interpretive Centre' at which people are introduced to the science of the GBR, are shown experimental work with corals etc, have the opportunity to view displays, watch movies and listen to talks and could even pay to go diving, work with guides to remove crown-of-thorns and assist in research projects like seeding coral and working on adaptation to the changing temperatures etc.
- Ngaro Traditional Owners Cultural Centre
- A board walk offering informative guided tours through the extensive nearby mangroves on the way toward Flametree. Well conceived, there is no doubt that, in time, it is a facility that could become a major tourism attraction for the State and region, add a level of gravitas to the Whitsunday tourism mix and become self sustaining and even potentially very profitable.
- Provide facilities for long term (and potential new) local businesses operating from Shute. For example: "Salty Dog Sea Kayaking" has been running for 20 years based almost the whole time at Shute Harbour. The operator would like to continue to operate at Shute Harbour, as an island kayaking business (and let's face it, this is where the islands are, not Airlie Beach). The operation takes up little space, has minimal impact on surroundings/environment and offers a unique product that is only sustainable from Shute Harbour.
- A café/restaurant, a cinema/theatrette, a book/souvenir shop and even low-key accommodation.
- Maintain the commercial ramp, for operators whom it would be unviable to relocate to Airlie Beach. Island Camping Connection - this business is logistically linked to Salty Dog, with campers often taking kayaks out on the water taxi service. And Island Transfer – this business is the sole operator that is continuing to service Palm Bay on Long Island, (1 of the 2 existing island resorts that still operate after Cyclone Debbie
-
- Ensure that the Salty Dog kayaking facility maintains its current Shute Harbour location. On almost a daily basis we see a dozen or more kayaks setting off to explore the local waterways. The word-of-mouth value of this service, to the Whitsunday mainland tourism industry, goes well beyond the immediate returns to the Salty Dog business.

- I suggest that Shute Harbour would be an ideal location to develop an Aquarium similar to one currently being built in Cairns. Founders have done this off their own back with no government funding & it will be world class – I strongly suggest to pay a site visit & meet Daniel Leipnik & Andrew Preston for more information on their vision & future plans
- Also a good location for Marine studies institute and could centralise QPWS & GBRMPA offices so entire area is to do with Marine education & government bodies dovetailing in same area. Possibilities are endless and sure with some philanthropic modelling with State & Fed funding anything is possible. After all this is part of The Great Barrier Reef with over 42% tourist visitation and could then remain home to some of the smaller operators to continue the port facility & protect the surrounding area. This would be community acceptable Commercial development for the benefit of all.
-
- Not for commercial or bureaucratic offices
- I personally think a smallish, low impact, environmentally sensitive, single storey science facility with educational and interactive application (perhaps in conjunction with AIMS and GBRMPA) within the jetty precinct is a great idea and I am not against it. Ireland for example has three exceptional examples in the Interpretive Centres at the Cliffs of Moher, Newgrange and the Céide Fields
- A marine centre is significantly preferable to an industrial staging point for the islands or high rise apartment/hotels, which are always a temptation and a threat as long as the area is virgin territory.
- A science facility, if it could be properly conceived (including low level tourism interaction) and funded, could help to save Shute from mass/crass development, improve the gravitas level of our regional tourism product, do something positive for the GBR and perhaps even turn a profit. Done right I'm all for it.
- Improve the boat ramp for better all-tide access
- The Council reps (at the market) had no info re the EOI applications recently closed for this site (Shute Harbour terminal rebuild). The concern is that they are giving the public a limited window to reply to this, and on offer is no information of their intent.ie. what is planned? The marina planned for Shute bay still has open approval till 24/01/54,and it begs the question if there is another agenda at play?
- Could it be possible that the marina proposal may try to expand their project?

We trust these suggestions will be useful in informing Council and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further.

Sincerely,



President
Save Our Foreshore Inc

Save Our Foreshore is an association registered under the Incorporated Association Act. It is a community organisation created by citizens of the community of Whitsunday having a particular interest in ensuring that public access to the coast and amenity of coastal public lands are preserved and enhanced for the long term benefit of their ecological, scenic and recreational values as enjoyed by the Whitsunday community and visitors to the area

Saving Whitsunday public foreshores since 2004:

2004-2007 - Airlie Beach public foreshore parkland - FKP/Eumundi/Outrigger high-rise development stopped/State Government
2004 – ongoing - convert Airlie Beach public foreshore zoned for parkland from temporary car parking to people’s parkland
2006 - Funnel Bay RESORT CORP development application - public access and public beach retained
2007 - Illegal foreshore land clearing exposed at Clarke’s cove /GBRMPA/Dryander National Park – prosecution successful/State/Council/Federal
2008-2009 QER Oil Shale Mine and Processing plant on Goorganga Wetlands & Repulse Bay – won 20 year Moratorium, mine pit rehabilitated/State/Community/MCG
2009 – Chalco Aluminium processing plant on Caley Valley Wetlands stopped – participation in coalition of community groups
2010 – ongoing: Shute Harbour Marina development proposal/Shute Harbour Residents Association/community objections
2011-2012 - Airlie Main Street redevelopment with ‘Bend in the Road’ loss of public foreshore to hotel land swap – stopped/community
2012 – Gloucester resort application to close public access to beach – community objections, not approved by Council/stopped
2013 - Wave pool proposal on lagoon public foreshore – applicants did not proceed past concept stage
2016 – Airlie Beach public foreshore - Community Markets relocation & foreshore redevelopment proposal - location retained/Lions and market stall holders
2017 - Hydeaway Bay - Black Current Island boat ramp report accepted by Council - community objections supported