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Attention: Gaye Scott

Dear Ms Scott

RE: PORT DOUGLAS MASTER PLAN PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS – WARNER STREET, MACROSSAN STREET AND WATERFRONT SOUTH PRECINCT.

Douglas Shire Sustainability Group Inc. (DSSG) makes the following submissions regarding proposed developments:

- Warner Street upgrade
- Macrossan St revitalisation
- Waterfront South Precinct

We note that the Macrossan St survey and associated comment references the Port Douglas Waterfront Master Plan (the Master Plan) – an overarching plan that Plan was developed over some years, with a high level of community participation and input. We note also the companion document – Port Douglas Waterfront Master Plan Landscape Design Guide (the Landscape design guide).

In our view, both these plans, which took a twenty year view when devised, are still relevant and should be referenced in both the Warner Street upgrade and the Waterfront South Precinct development. DSSG observes that Council staff involved in the community consultation processes do not appear to have knowledge of or consider the Masterplan to be relevant.

DSSG submits that a common vision is critical to community engagement and consultation, and urges Council to apply the Master Plan and the Landscape design guide to future development in Port Douglas.

In making these submissions, DSSG supports, in particular, the following summary of guiding principles from the Master Plan:

- Acknowledge the importance of sustainability which needs to underpin all aspects of Port Douglas,
- Provide a green heart for the town centre from the market area (and St Mary's) to Rex Smeal Park,
- Make the waterfront the heart of Port Douglas,
- Reflect the tropical, relaxed, unhurried character of Port Douglas in the way people move around the town on foot,
- Acknowledge, preserve and reflect the Indigenous and non-Indigenous heritage of Port Douglas

We also note the following design principles included in the landscape design guide:

- Landscape is designed and maintained to create a safe and accessible environment with a strong pedestrian focus.
- The style and form of landscape and built elements and selection of plant species and materials are consistent with the tropical character of Port Douglas.
- The selection and placement of plants creates a shady, park-like atmosphere which features and showcases native species.
- All landscape works embody principles of sustainability,
- Landscape design honours the many layers of cultural heritage in Port Douglas through art, design, interpretation and storytelling.
- The unique qualities of individual precincts are clearly distinguishable within the overall village character.

The stated aim of the landscape design guide is:

“The aim is to ensure that future change remains true to the relaxed village feel of the town, an incremental change that appears both natural and in harmony with the current surroundings. Subtle transformations are sought which will blend with and flow from the unique character of Port Douglas”.

Warner Street Upgrade

DSSG has considered the Cardno options paper with reference to the Master Plan and the landscape design guide. DSSG prefers Option 2 – dual lane with pedestrian landscaped zone.

This design allows for retention of some of the existing trees and significant planting of extra trees, and utilises an ‘ecological approach’ to drainage. It creates a shady pedestrian zone with street furniture which should be produced using wood from trees removed on the other side of the roadway¹.

¹ Refer to page 32 and 33 of the landscape design guide.

DSSG would prefer a pedestrian path that is 'organic and curvilinear in appearance rather than angular and geometric'². In addition, DSSG would prefer a decked walkway in this section of the street rather than pavers, per the landscape design guide³.

Option 2 has less car parking spaces than other options, however we see this as an advantage and encourage Council to develop the mobility hub outlined in the Master Plan⁴ – walking and cycling around town will be encouraged with shade and good pathways.

We note that the Master Plan calls for the length off Warner Street to be planted with large shade trees⁵, and DSSG calls on Council to include this in the Warner Street upgrade project.

*“This will provide much needed shade and help to reduce the impact of the larger scale buildings in this section of the street and help reconnect this part of the town to the waterfront. At present the dominance of the Coles building, its’ loading and parking facilities and the proximity of other rather industrial scale buildings creates an uneasy feel more suited to town fringe than town centre. The planting of large scale tropical trees will lessen these impacts and improve the general streetscape. Landscaping will also frame the view corridor to Dixie Street, which is in fact in direct alignment with Warner Street and forms a strong axis to the Sugar Wharf and St Mary’s by the Sea”.*⁶

Macrossan Street revitalisation

DSSG has considered the issues raised in the on-line survey with reference to the Master Plan and the landscape design guide. DSSG is of the view that Council should progress the Master Plan concept of a 'green spine'⁷ revitalisation of Macrossan Street.

*“The green spine is intended to reduce the impact of vehicle infrastructure and provide immediate green space amenity to Macrossan Street while connecting the retail strip to the overall open space system”.*⁸

In our view the revitalisation of Macrossan Street is a very high priority – it is the face of Port Douglas and it is currently 'down at heel' and dysfunctional.

DSSG supports specific design features outlined in the landscape design guide⁹:

- Extend median planting and centre parking along the remainder of Macrossan Street between Owen Street and Davidson Street.
- Minimise the impact of the large intersections with surface treatments.
- Maintain the ad hoc nature of the streetscape by allowing for non-uniform approach to street furniture.
- Maintain and enhance the current mix of tropical shade trees allowing for flowering species to add colour and interest.

Increasing street furniture and adding public art would enhance the streetscape.

² Page 28 landscape design guide.

³ Page 47 landscape design guide.

⁴ Page 32 Master Plan.

⁵ Page 28 Master Plan.

⁶ Page 48 landscape design guide.

⁷ Page 28 Master Plan

⁸ Page 40 Master Plan

⁹ Page 51 landscape design guide

Waterfront South Precinct

DSSG understands the Waterfront South Precinct development (South precinct plan) is driven by the proposed Crystalbrook Super Yacht Marina; which apparently demands relocation of the public boat ramp, the commercial boats and associated retail and commercial businesses currently housed at the marina. We note that Crystalbrook will operate the current slipway for two years, however it is not clear where the slipway will be located after this time. The Master Plan shows a slipway at Marano fuel depot area, however this is not shown on the South precinct plan.

DSSG supports the development concept of the area between the Yacht Club and the Fisherman's Wharf, and is excited about the potential for a local catch sales co-operative. We note that trawler fishing should not be encouraged due to its negative impact on the marine environment.

DSSG has a number of concerns with the South precinct plan.

Mangrove removal

The Master Plan provided for a public boat ramp near the Yacht Club, whereas the South precinct plan places the public boat ramp further south, necessitating removal of a relatively large group of mangroves and significant fill to create car parking.

In addition, mangroves will be removed to create a boat yard at the Yacht Club, presumably to replace the existing hard stand yard which will be replaced by tour and retail/commercial operations.

Further, another area of mangrove is identified for removal to facilitate future marine operations.

The Master Plan provides:

"In order to preserve and enhance the natural environment of Port Douglas the master plan will focus on: Ensuring that all new development and open space improvements enhance, in overall terms, the environmental qualities of the town. This will require the outright protection of certain areas, such as the mangroves south of the marina, balanced with some change in other areas, such as the sports ground, to improve the quality of facilities and amenities"¹⁰.

DSSG is concerned about the removal of so much mangrove, and notes that this will require separate environmental approval and offset.

Use of Sports fields

DSSG notes that the Master Plan envisages a network of pedestrian and cycle paths through the sports fields connecting the town and waterfront¹¹, and tropical landscaping and shade planting at the sports fields¹².

The South precinct plan includes a second access driveway into the sports fields and a significant amount of hard stand parking inside the sports fields' area.

¹⁰ Page 21 Master Plan

¹¹ Page 32 Master Plan

¹² Page 38 Master Plan

DSSG is concerned to see that any increase of hard stand at the sports fields must be offset by plantings, shade trees and pedestrian and bicycle access, per the Master Plan.

Large amounts of hard stand

The South precinct plan includes alarmingly large areas of hard stand for parking vehicles.

The Master Plan notes:

“Large areas of car parking should be broken up by landscaping and designated pedestrian corridors should be provided to ensure safe movement through the area.”¹³

DSSG is not convinced that such large areas of hard stand are required, especially for ‘overflow’ parking, and recommends that Council develop the ‘mobility hub’¹⁴ concept further.

Conclusion

In addition to Macrossan Street revitalisation, DSSG encourages Council to progress, as a feature of further development plans to revitalise Port Douglas waterfront, the following elements of the Master Plan¹⁵:

A Walkable Waterfront: A key focus of the master planning process has been the creation of a ‘walkable waterfront’ providing public access to the water’s edge from Rex Smeal Park to the Yacht Club. This will take the form of a variety of paths, quayside boardwalks, and potentially floating pontoons, and may, because of the complex tenure arrangements, come forward in a staged manner.

A Mobility Hub: In order to unlock the waterfront from ‘at grade’ parking uses and return it to open space a ‘mobility hub’ is proposed on the land between Wharf, Grant, Mowbray and Warner Streets. The concept for the mobility hub is to consolidate car parking, coach drop off, and car hire and cycle storage in one location in proximity to the centre.

A Sustainable Market: The weekly market at Port Douglas is one of the iconic experiences of the waterfront and the master plan seeks to ensure its remains so. The plan aims to put in place a simple series of paths that will protect the root zones of established trees from vehicular and foot traffic. This approach will ensure the longevity of the large trees currently in Rex Smeal Park. In addition to this, the creation of a ‘mobility hub’ will reduce car-parking pressure on the Police reserve area, further protecting the significant trees of the area.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment

Yours faithfully



Laurene Hull
Secretary

¹³ Page 38 Master Plan

¹⁴ Page 27 Master Plan

¹⁵ Pages 24-28 Master Plan