



Community Engagement Report

“Between a Rock and a Hard Place”

Service Delivery Review Community Feedback

April to May 2021

FINAL

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1. Introduction

This report outlines the processes and findings of the community engagement undertaken to inform the decision making for Council's 2021-2022 Operational Plan and Budget.

2. Background

North Burnett Regional Council is facing financial sustainability issues, along with one third of local governments across Queensland (Queensland Audit Office Report 19/20). Council has been recording year-on-year operating deficits. This has caused significant concern for the current Councillors and State Government. At its general meeting of 30 October 2019, Council resolved to commence a Business Improvement Optimisation Program (BIOP) with the Queensland Treasury Corporation (QTC) to begin addressing its financial sustainability. This program has three key areas of work, which are:

- Internal review of Council's key cost drivers to identify and prioritise improvement initiatives
- A service delivery review to understand inconstant services across the North Burnett and identify which services should be considered core business
- Review of the depreciation cost of Council's assets

At the General Council meeting in May 2019, Council resolved to adopt a set of principles to guide the Service Delivery Review. Specifically, Principal #4 addresses services that may not be core business for Council to deliver:

#4 - Council is willing to consider withdrawing or amending selective service delivery mechanisms (internal and external):

- that do not align with the organisation's Corporate Plan;
- that are clearly not a local government's responsibility;
- where there is an effective alternate service provider; or
- which unnecessarily and/or adversely affect its financial sustainability.

Additionally, Principal #6 mandated that where significant change is proposed, the community must be consulted on the proposed change and the proposed change can only occur as approved by a Council resolution.

#6 - Where potential significant change initiatives are identified as part of the SDR program, before the implementation of the initiative and only after appropriate consultation (internal and/or external) has been undertaken, only Council may approve the change.

The full Service Delivery Review report was tabled and adopted by Council at its general meeting held 24 February 2021.

3. The Project

In line with Council's responsibility to understand the needs and desires of the North Burnett community, Councillors undertook an extensive engagement project with the community. This began in October 2020 where Councillors held listening posts in each of the North Burnett main towns to ask the community what was important to them. Council services that were listed by the community as the Top 10 are shown in Figure 1.

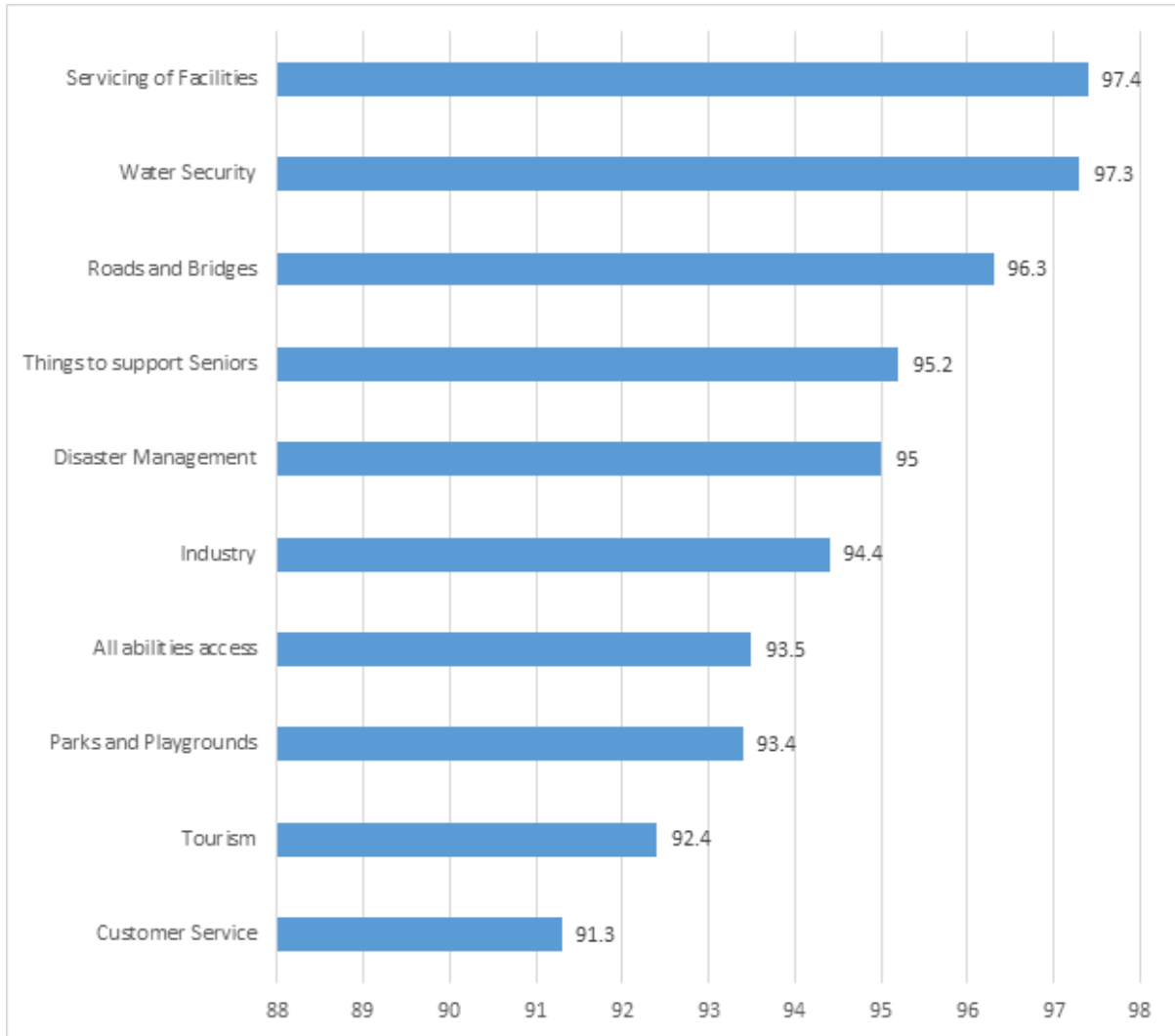


Figure 1: Top 10 Council services from community feedback as part of the 2020 Corporate Plan Engagement project.

4. Aims and Objectives

Following this engagement and in-line with SDR Principal #6, Councillors undertook extensive community engagement during April and May 2021. The purpose of this engagement was:

- To discuss with the community the role of Council and where it currently delivers services that Council is not required to do so
- To provide the community with facts regarding the financial sustainability challenges of North Burnett Regional Council
- To highlight possible changes to external facing services and the possible budget savings from the proposed changes

These services included:

- A change in road maintenance methodology for the Civil Works Crews
- Change in opening days for Customer Service and Library Centres to:
 - Biggenden – 2 days a week
 - Eidsvold – 2 days a week
 - Gayndah – 3 days a week
 - Monto – 3 days a week
 - Mt Perry – 2 days a week
 - Mundubbera – 3 days a week
- Change in opening hours for Waste Management Facilities to:
 - Biggenden – 12 hours a week
 - Eidsvold – 12 hours a week
 - Gayndah – 12 hours a week
 - Monto – 12 hours a week
 - Mt Perry – 12 hours a week
 - Mundubbera – 32 hours a week (As regional landfill facility)
- Proposal to stop mowing land that is not the responsibility of Council
- Proposal to have a consistent model for showgrounds across the region
- Proposal to consider the number of pools across the region and how they are funded

The engagement aimed to ignite the communities' *civic duty* and to be part of the solution in facing the regions sustainability challenges. Councillors wanted to ensure that all the information was presented to inform and educate community regarding the challenges Council faces and discuss options may be available.

5. How Councillors engaged

Six “*Between a Rock and a Hard Place*” Community Meetings were held over a period of three weeks from 21 April 2021 to 5 May 2021:

Mount Perry:	Tuesday 20 April 2021	79 people
Gayndah:	Wednesday 21 April 2021	197 people
Mundubbera:	Wednesday 28 April 2021	218 people
Biggenden:	Thursday 29 April 2021	136 people
Eidsvold:	Wednesday 5 May 2021	150 people
Monto:	Thursday 6 May 2021	350 people

There was a very high level of community participation, with over 1,000 residents attending across the 6 events.

At each of these community meetings, Mayor Rachel Chambers presented a synopsis of the current financial situation, the forecast for future sustainability of the North Burnett Region, and an explanation of contributing factors that led to this position over the past 13 years since Amalgamation of the six shires in 2008.

With reference to the 2nd Principle of Local Government: “*Sustainable development and management of assets and infrastructure, and delivery of effective services*”, proposals for changes to six service delivery areas were presented and community were invited to submit their feedback on each proposal. The community engagement process was designed in line with the IAP2 principals, as outlined in Figure 2.

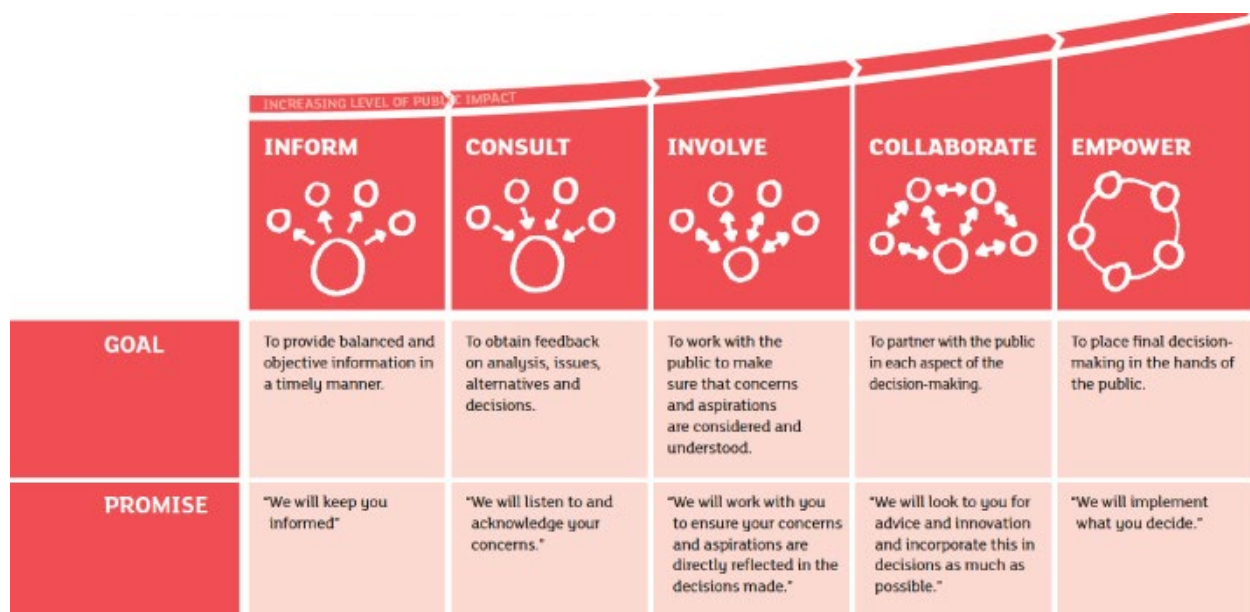


Figure 2: IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

Feedback forms were distributed to the attendees at the meeting. To maximize participation across the region, the Mundubbera Community Meeting on Wednesday 21 April 2021 was filmed and uploaded to Council’s website to give the community widespread access to the content being discussed. Feedback forms could also be accessed via a survey monkey link on Council’s website, and hard copies available at each Customer Service Centre. The survey closed at Monday 10 May 2021 at 5pm.

All feedback provided has been collated and summarised into this report, with a full list of feedback and comments provided to Councillors.

6. Participants

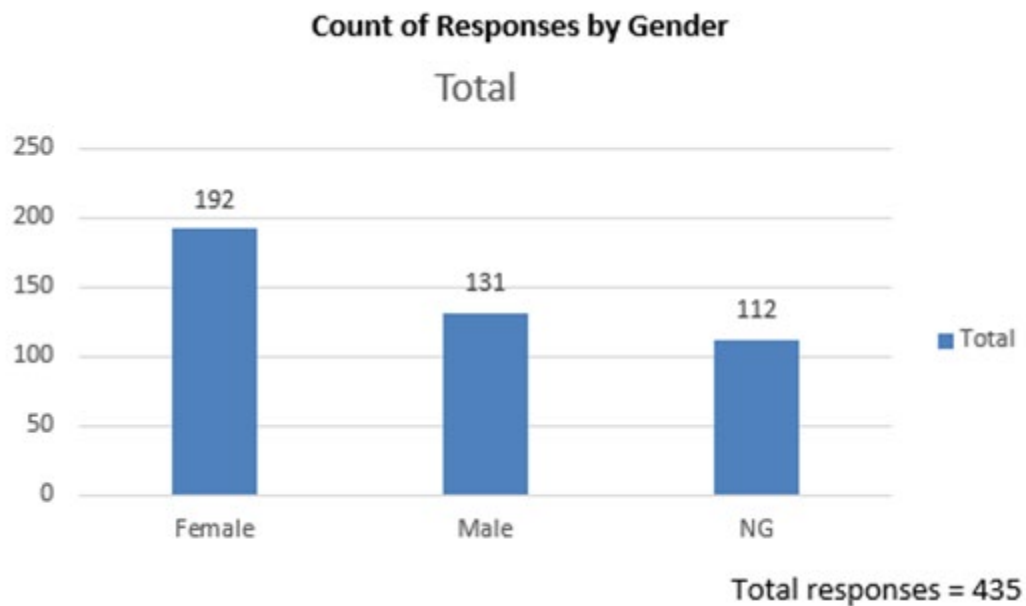
435 responses were received as part of the community engagement process. This represents 4.08% of the North Burnett community. These were received via the following methods:

- Paper submissions
- Emails
- Online submissions
- Online survey

The following table shows the geographic breakdown of responses as well as the age groups.

Responses by Postcode (64 responses did not state postcode)									
Resident	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Not Stated	Total
Biggenden			5	6	9	11	4	2	37
Eidsvold		1	2	1	3	8	6	1	22
Gayndah	2	3	18	11	16	13	8	4	75
Monto	2	7	23	24	20	19	12	12	119
Mundubbera	3	10	15	18	24	11	5	5	91
Mount Perry		1	3	5	6	3	7	4	29
No Postcode				2	1		1	58	62
Total	7	22	66	67	79	65	43	86	435

The following graph shows response by gender, with 112 not nominating.



7. Findings

The following is a summary of the emerging trends and opinions that can be interpreted by cross-referencing key terms within the data.

General Sentiment from Feedback

- There is a perceived frustration, anger and anxiety concerning the current financial situation of Council and a general commitment to wanting to see and help the situation to improve.
- There is a perceived level of mistrust within community whereby ratepayers believe that decisions have already been made to reduce services to communities and that this engagement process is for show.
- Commentary around the perceived ratio of management staff to workers
- Community indicate they would like to see savings measures start at the top by the cutting of all unnecessary spending and adopting an “essentials only” mindset that will flow through the whole organisation. This is evidenced by 139 respondents (32% of survey sample) voicing comments about vehicles/cars/prados/4WD and concerns about the size of the council vehicle fleet, it’s cost to maintain and private use of vehicles).
- Concerns about inadequate funding to Council from State and Federal Government.
- Perception that the shires were better off prior to amalgamation – particularly for road maintenance.

The responses to the six areas of possible changes to services are discussed in the following pages.

7.1 Pools

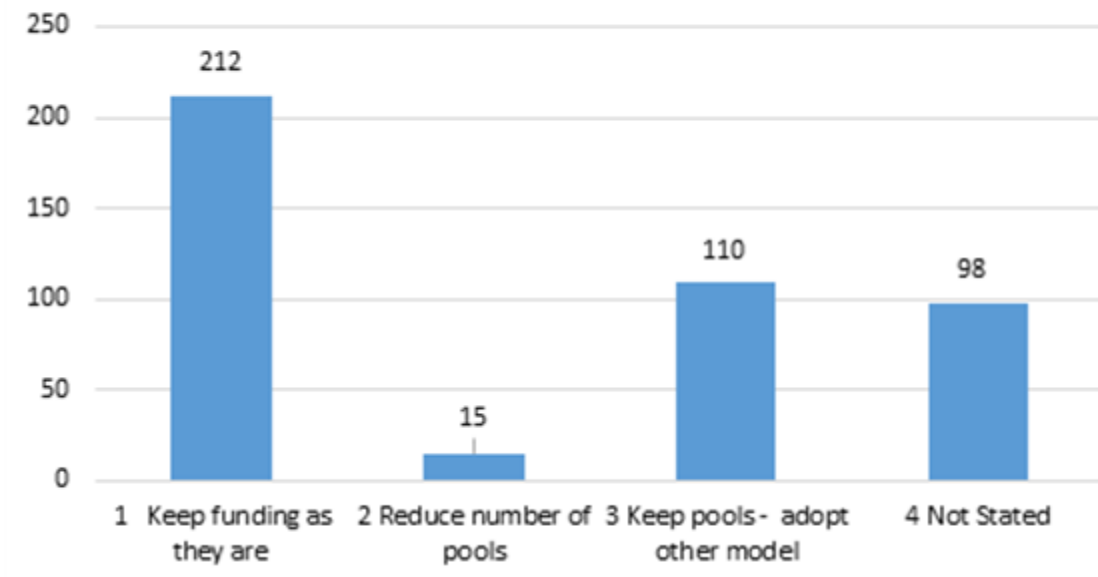
Council presented a summary of the cost of pools to the community and sought feedback regarding community preferences to possible pool closures.

7.1.1 Sentiment

Response	Tally	Percentage
Keep funding pools as is	212	49%
Reduce the number of pools	15	3.5%
Keep Pools – seek alternative funding model	110	25%
Not Stated	98	22.5%

Nearly 50% of the responses indicates that the community wish to see funding for pools remain at the current level. Additionally, 25% of the responses wish to see all six pools remain in operation and alternative funding models explored. 3.5% responded in favour of reducing the number of operating pools in the region.

Feedback on Pools Proposal



7.1.2 Themes

- Pools are important for liveability in the town, teaching children an important life skill, therapy for health concerns, community meeting places, essential to attract families to live in the region

7.1.3 Challenges and Pain Points

- If pools are reduced, who is going to subsidise the travel to other towns to use pool (schools / general community members)?
- Concern about loss of educational time in classrooms if need to travel to other towns to access pool.

7.1.4 Suggestions

- Alternative funding suggestions included: lobbying state government for funding, applying for grants, privatisation, Council receiving money for the takings, and changing lease arrangements.
- Some communities raised funds to establish the pools. Could they fundraise to keep them?
- Renegotiate lease arrangements with pool operators so that Council is not responsible for the maintenance costs. Run pools as a business. Council should receive revenue from pools.
- Suggestion to give the pools to community to run and maintain. Could swim clubs be more involved in the future of the pool by applying for grant funding to improve the asset, and when needed, replace the asset.
- Council and community must lobby state and federal governments to keep this essential service in each community.
- Lobby Education Queensland to help fulfil their goal of each child learning to swim.

7.1.5 Sample of Comments

Pools are essential for kids to learn to swim and for Rehab for older citizens.
Please consider the ongoing costs of bussing kids to pools in other towns!
Plan for replacement of the pools in a staggered fashion and continue adequate maintenance to extend their useful lives until replacement.
Continue to lobby for funding for future upgrade/replacement of pools given emphasis on "learn to swim"
As a family we use the pool 2-3 times a week – we live out of town and drive in.
Have fundraising events to maintain pools ... apply for more grants.
Cut back costs, not on the necessary items like pools etc
Privatize all pools – sell at reasonable cost, thereby freeing council of maintenance costs, and wages drain.
It's ludicrous to consider closing pools. A massive social impact. It's a part of learning to swim and being safe.

7.2 Waste

The State Government is now committed to zero waste future. As a result, Councils must pay the State \$80 per tonne to bury waste – without any financial support from 2022. This will cost the North Burnett community \$480,000 each year. Currently Council have inconsistent hours of operation across the region, with site visits to our waste facilities averaging only 4 vehicles per hour across the region. The optimum is 10.

7.2.1 Sentiment

Response	Tally	Percentage
Keep days and hours as is	124	28.5%
Accept reduced hours as per proposal	197	45.3%
Not Stated	114	26.2%

There is reasonable support to reduce hours of operation at the waste facility stations throughout the North Burnett with 45% in favour of this course of action. 70 respondents (16%) suggested recycling services be implemented to alleviate landfill in the North Burnett



7.2.2 Themes

- Reduced hours are reasonably accepted as indicated by 45% of the respondents
- Opening hours need to cater for both weekday and weekend access
- Rural residents rely on the service as they don't access curb side collection.

7.2.3 Challenges and Pain Points

- Concerns that reduced hours will mean rubbish being dumped on roadsides
- New hours must be considerate of weekend workers
- Some businesses rely on dump access to dispose of waste on a regular basis (eg retail butcher shops). Businesses already experiencing issues on days dump is closed.
- Concerns about design of Waste Transfer Facility and lack of user friendliness
- Consider having dumps open on the same days as library to reduce trips to town for residents
- Dump hours need to be promoted more broadly with notices in each town. Not everyone uses social media.

7.2.4 Suggestions

- Interest in recycling being explored and options
- Lobby state government to reduce charges on waste levies
- Consider tender for waste management rather than Council.
- Consider charges for taking waste to the dump and vouchers for free drop off (like other Councils)
- Unmanned facilities - do dumps need to be staffed?
- Suggestions to raise revenue/create electricity through power generation from dump sites
- Consider using volunteers to keep waste facility open longer hours
- Three dumps combined (Eidsvold and Monto), (Gayndah and Mundubbera), (Biggenden and Mt Perry) - 3 days a week each

7.2.5 Sample of Comments

We don't need 4 days a week for the dumps to be open. The money saved on this could be put into other areas.
I think the dump hours need to be reduced and the community can work around this.
If we don't have access to a dump, there will be increased dumping on sides of the roads and on properties.
We need our dump open on the weekends because Saturday and Sunday are the busiest days.
The dump could be open for 2 days during the week and a Saturday or Sunday.
It's a necessary utility but dump doesn't need to be open every day.
We try to be "waste-friendly", we currently only go to the dump monthly.
We only need reasonable hours, or some people will use the roads as a rubbish dump.
Our business relies on being able to take rubbish to the dump regularly with our own truck.

7.3 Customer Service and Libraries

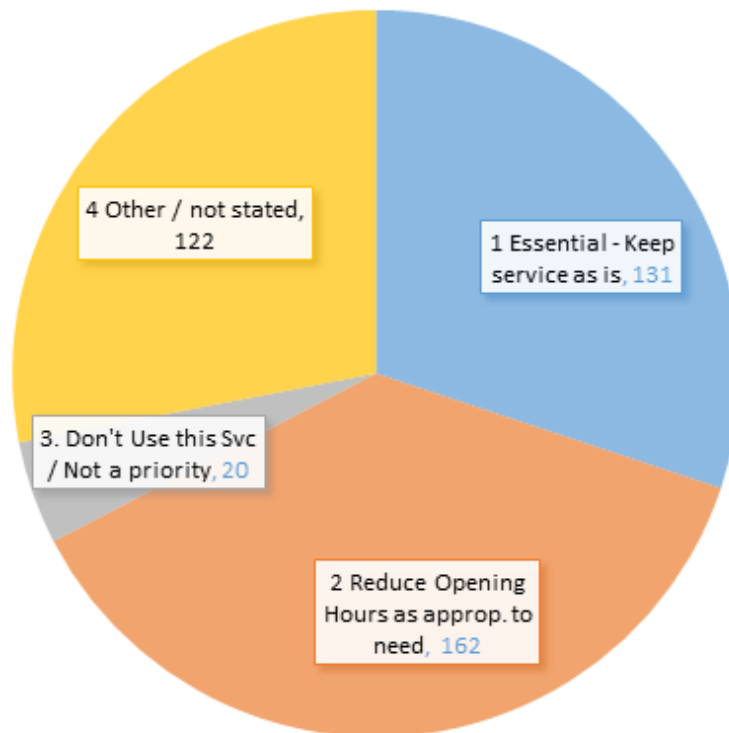
Council currently operate Customer Service and Library Centres across all 6 towns in the North Burnett. These facilities are all operated 5 days a week with Monto, Eidsvold, Mundubbera and Gayndah centres open from 9am to 12pm on Saturdays.

7.3.1 Sentiment

Responses	Tally	Percentage
Keep service as is	131	30%
Reduce Opening Hours	162	37%
Don't Use this service	20	5%
Not Stated	122	28%

37% of respondents accepted the proposal to reduce opening hours of the customer service centres and libraries. If coupled with the 5% of respondents who stated that they don't use the service at all – this brings the total to 42% who would accept reduced hours for this service. 30% of responses wish to maintain the service as is, particularly for older residents and those who prefer face-to-face access to council services. The feedback can be seen in the graph below.

**FEEDBACK ON PROPOSAL FOR
CUSTOMER SERVICE AND LIBRARY CENTRES**



7.3.2 Themes

- Some respondents indicated that Customer Service Centres and Library Centres are important to the community regarding assistance for older residents to access Council services in each town, resources for home-schoolers, community meeting spot with air-conditioning, NDIS programs use libraries and a point of reference in each town to gain information/assistance.
- There is a level of perception that our service centres are currently overstaffed as there is regularly more than one person situated in the front counter area.
- A level of the community are keen to retain access to QGAP services and ensure Council is fully compensated for providing QGAP and Centrelink services to community

7.3.3 Challenges and Pain Points

- During hot summer months, libraries provide a cool airconditioned space for locals
- Older residents without access to technology or internet rely on face-to-face customer service to access council services
- Home-school students would not have daily access to resources
- The CS&L often serves as the tourism information / point of contact spot in each town for visitors to our region. If the centres are only open sporadically, the region could potentially miss tourism revenue.
- In Monto, elderly and very young utilise the toilet facilities in the library. Public toilets are too far away.

7.3.4 Suggestions

- Charge an annual fee to belong to library
- Have staggered hours so centre opens during lunch break
- Have a mobile library for the region
- Use volunteers to deliver the library service.
- Improve online access to Council services by converting libraries into technology hubs
- Many varied suggestions for suitable hours of opening
- Utilise administration staff to keep the centres open (multi-task)

7.3.5 Sample of Comments

I use the library at least 3 times per fortnight.
I don't use the library.
Limit to regular hours communicated to public via website or social media, notices on library. Library assistant could be multitasking.
We don't need full time libraries!
Knowing access to customer service to people who know the area is a huge advantage. Having the library centre is one of the few places young people can go nowadays.
Library services can be accessed in every town reduced hours should not be a problem.
I rarely use the library, so this doesn't affect me. However, customer service does need to be kept open and perhaps have staggered hours for lunch breaks to ensure it can remain open. If it takes staff reduction well, I guess that is first option.
Keep them open every day. We live in a rural area and people can't get to town on set days due to whatever is happening on their farms. Sometimes it's short notice to go to town and if they need to do something at the library and it's a closed day, that is just a wasted trip.
Putting a human face to council. Talking to a person about concern. Library – books will never go out of style.

7.4 Road Maintenance

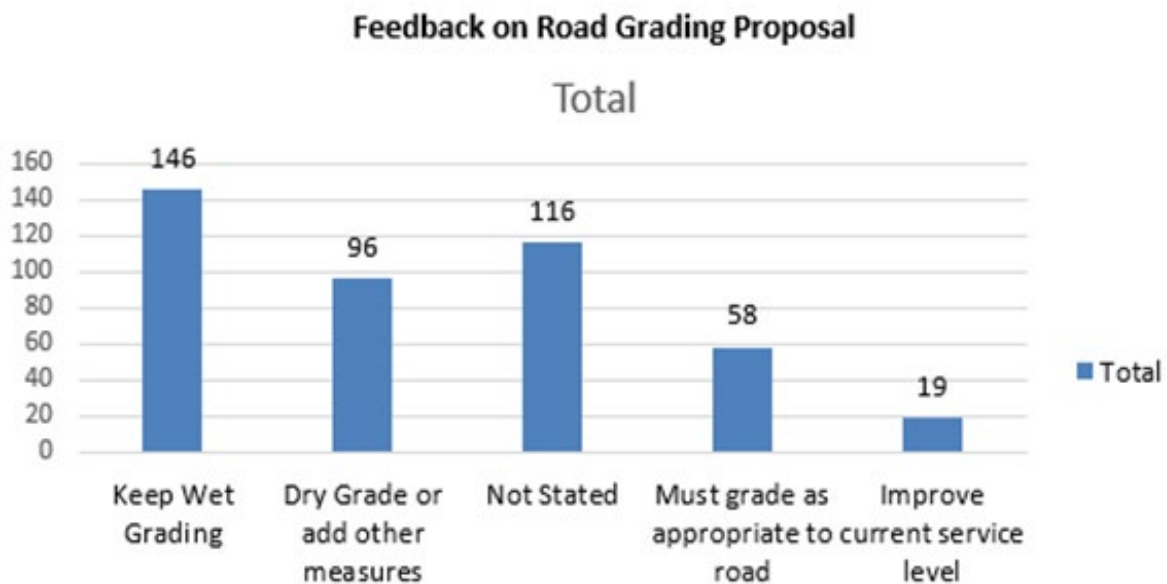
If Council were to continue with its current methodology and practices, Council would need a minimum of \$10 million in funding each year to maintain the regions gravel road network. Current practices and budget are limiting maintenance to approximately 33% of the road network annually, leaving 66% of the road network un-touched with many roads not being serviced for years on end. Council needs to look at alternative options to provide an acceptable level of service to ratepayers having regard to the Council’s financial capacity.

Council faces many challenges with its extensive road network, the 5th largest in Queensland. The road network is broken into 6 hierarchies as per the Austroads classification, these are specified in Table 1, totalling 3,227km of unsealed roads.

7.4.1 Sentiment

Responses	Tally	Percentage
Keep current maintenance practice and service level	146	33.6%
Dry Grade or add other measures	96	22%
Not Stated	116	26.7%
Must Grade as Appropriate to Road	58	13.3%
Improve Current Service Level	19	4.4%

One third of all respondents advocated for a continuation of the current maintenance levels for reasons of road safety and road surface longevity. 13.3% said that roads should be maintained as appropriate to the road. Some respondents cautioned improvements are needed to drainage to ensure water does not stay on the roads during wet weather events and to preserve road longevity.



7.4.2 Themes

- A safe and viable road network is integral to connect the regions for business, tourism and general safety of motorists travelling within and through our region.
- A "one size fits all" approach will not work - each road should be assessed for suitability of wet or dry grading.
- Dry grading is acceptable for light use roads but requires more frequent grading as the it wears more rapidly.
- Wet Grading of roads is the preferred method of road maintenance as the majority believe that switching to dry grading only will see the roads deteriorate more quickly as the water and roller are needed to pack the dirt down. Many believe that dry grading would cost more in the long run as the surface would not last as long.
- Drainage is an issue of concern regarding road surface preservation
- School bus routes should be wet graded for safety
- Strong opinion that prior to amalgamation, the individual Shires maintained a safer road network than what is currently provided.

7.4.3 Challenges and Pain Points

- If dry grade only, concerns about dust issues, potholes, corrugations, and longevity of the road surface which would be quickly affected by traffic (particularly big rigs), prolonged rain or storms
- Concerns that lives will be lost if the roads are not appropriately maintained
- Concerns about increased car accidents and damage to cars from potholes, corrugations, slippery surfaces, dust/lack of visibility
- Concerns about effect on tourism numbers if roads are not safe and user friendly for RV's/caravans passing through region
- Businesses will suffer if roads deteriorate
- Reducing staff numbers in the road maintenance crews will have an impact and flow on effect throughout the North Burnett as staff and their families may leave the region to find other work
- Increased dust affects resources for cattle (they don't like eating the dusty grass)
- Concerns about sale of road maintenance plant and equipment (graders and rollers) when the length of road network to maintain is the same.
- Maintaining a balance between Council, local and non-local contractors to complete the road maintenance work. Many respondents believe industrial relation rules prevent Council from being efficient in road maintenance as private contractors have greater flexibility to keep the grader working for longer hours during the day. Others want to see Council maintain a flexible, responsive road crew in each town to respond quickly to road maintenance during wet weather events.

7.4.4 Suggestions

- Maintenance schedule: prioritise high use roads or roads needing repair - don't perform maintenance on roads that don't need it
- Much feedback about Council needs to develop flexible (to be able to respond quickly after rain), skilled road building teams and drawing on local expertise from experienced operators.
- Offer traineeships in civil construction. i.e. save on wages but at the same time train the younger generation for the future.
- Each town be equipped with a roller that would be used over dirt roads during wet weather - this way rocks on road would be pressed back into the surface. In past, grading and rolling was carried out in inclement weather. It worked well.
- If roads are too far from base, engage local contractors who would be prepared to camp on job or work longer hours.
- Keep big rigs off the smaller roads. "All too often semi-trailers are using roads that they should not be on. If cattle farmers or fruit growers want to put semi's on small roads, then charge them a levy to fix the roads. They damage the roads."
- Drainage: If the road was graded to a crown + the table drains were used to reduce the amount of water washing the roads they would last longer than the present system of using the roads as drains. Put in more spoon drains to get water off the roads during rainfall events. Take care of drains and causeways etc so that water can get away from the road (under normal circumstances)
- Carry out weed control to ensure the water can reach the table drain and not run down the middle of the road.
- Water: look for more water drawing points which are closer to the job being done to reduce the distance the water truck needs to travel for each load of water; Use small dams for water storage on private properties as was done in past years
- Seal roads with higher traffic use and sections of road that deteriorate faster e.g. Mt Perry / Gayndah Rd, Monto - Mt Perry Road. Would be larger initial cost but maintenance would be less over time.
- Apply for federal grant funding using a proven grants funding writer
- Grade private roads / driveaway at the same time to raise funds.
- Consider raising rates to cover wet grading.
- lobby State and Federal Governments so they better understand our region's challenges of distance and cost to maintain safe roads; and to gain access to external road maintenance contracts to help fund our region
- Applying for every State and Commonwealth grant that was available. Some Shires are so busy dealing with their problems that they fail to adequately investigate and apply for every possible grant. It may need a dedicated officer to undertake this investigation and to prepare the grant applications, but it is worthwhile.
- Negotiating road maintenance contracts from Main Roads on all State Roads in your region. This underpins the construction and maintenance budgets and provide work continuity for staff and machinery
- Bidding for road construction contracts on State Roads also provides additional work for construction crews. It has been a while since I have been involved and recognise there may be changes to prequalification requirements to be able to apply for such works. I believe that this is an area where the State can be of assistance to struggling Shires.

7.4.5 Sample of Comments

If dry grading lets you get to mostly all the gravel roads instead of 50-40% each year. Good idea then.
Dry grading will make the roads go bad quicker.
Dry grading requires more frequent grading as the dry grading wears more rapidly. If the road was graded to a crown + the table drains were used to reduce the amount of water washing the roads they would last longer than the present system of using the roads as drains.
Those who live on gravel roads need them maintained but I doubt dry grading would last very long. If done more regularly would defeat the purpose. Wet grade and done well would be my preference.
Use dry grading and if it works to maintain the roads that is the way to go.
Dry grading if needs to happen. But will be accidents with dust and potholes.
I would be in favour of dry grading to get the work done.
When rains, contract more grading to cover more ground.
Wet grading only way to consolidate the road. Dry grading blows away in the wind, quickly leaving the original ruts.
Roads were once graded with no water truck or roller; they were only graded after rain. The grader worked seven days a week while the moisture was there.

7.5 Mowing

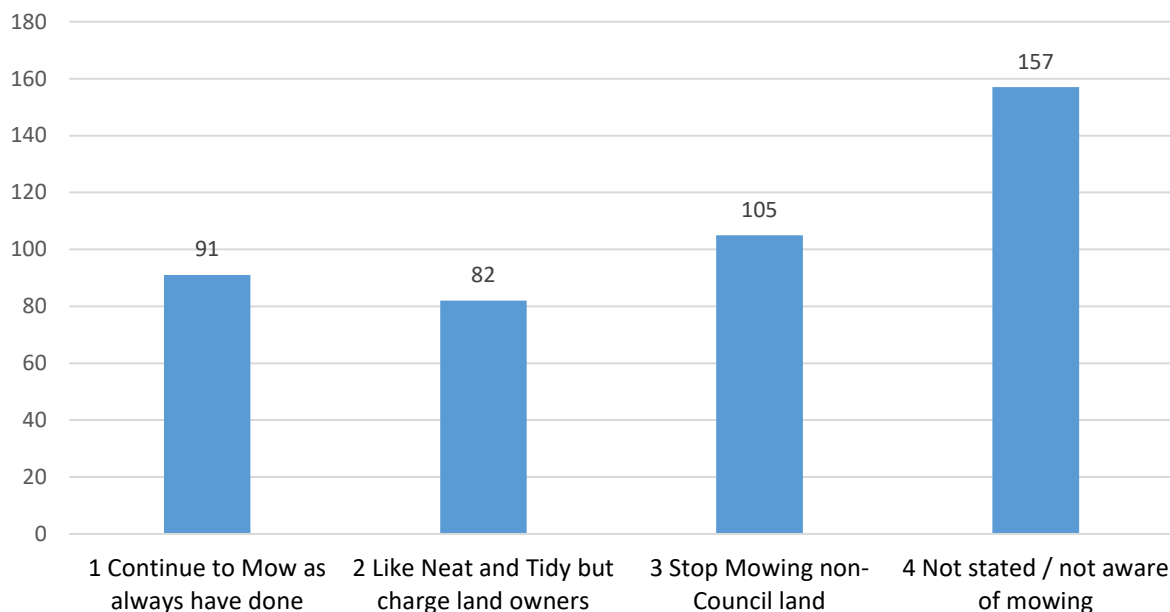
Investigations have found that Council mow various areas across the region that it is not responsible for, for example, land that is owned by the Queensland State Government or other private entities. This takes staff away from their core duties and maintenance responsibilities. Councillors asked the community for in-principle support to transition away from mowing areas that are not Council's responsibility.

7.5.1 Sentiment

Responses	Tally	Percentage
Continue to mow as always have done	91	21%
Like neat and tidy but charge landowners	82	19%
Stop mowing non-Council land	105	24%
Not stated / need more info	157	36%

Whilst nearly one quarter of respondents said Council should just stop mowing non-Council land altogether, 21% indicated to continue mowing what we always have done and 19% said they like a neat and tidy town, however Council should charge the landholders to mow their land. 43% in total indicated that Council should not be out of pocket for mowing land that it doesn't own. 36% of the community either didn't have a comment or would like more information in relation to what land Council mows that it doesn't own.

Feedback to Mowing Proposal



7.5.2 Themes

- Community wants to see tidy towns that are attractive for both community and tourists to the region, including approaches to townships.
- Mowing is important for reducing fire risk, road safety (walking, kangaroos, night driving), controlling vermin (snakes), presentation of the town
- Community would like further information on what areas are Council responsibility to mow and what areas are non-council.

7.5.3 Challenges and Pain Points

- If mowing is not done regularly, town image/presentation will suffer which in turn affects community morale, tourism (visitor experience)
- Long grass will increase risk in areas of controlling fire hazards, visibility, and access for road safety (walking, cycling, avoiding kangaroos, night driving), controlling vermin/snakes)

7.5.4 Suggestions

- Stop mowing land that is not Council's or obtain agreement for payment prior to mowing being completed.
- Consider community assistance by utilising offers of help from volunteers, community groups, work for the dole program
- In the spirit of "sharing the load", much community sentiment that the footpath outside of a person's home should be maintained by the homeowner/occupant (not Council).

7.5.5 Sample of Comments

I think it is fair that if NBRC is mowing state land, they need to be paid for this or stop this service.
Put the responsibility back to those landholders or charge those landholders for the mowing service.
Mowing helps to maintain a tidy town and shows a town that is proud and looked after.
Just mow what needs to be mowed – council areas.
Don't mow make whoever owns the land do the mowing.
Charge the people that will not mow their block.
Mowing of these areas is necessary to maintain a safe environment free from hazards.
Tidiness of our town, inviting to travellers who are spending money in our town. If parts of town or coming into town are not mowed, doesn't make the place look appealing.
If you do not own it, don't mow it or send a bill to those who need to pay for cost associated with "maintenance" of properties in the area.
Cease mowing government land for nothing. Send them a Bill!
I wasn't aware council was mowing land that was not their responsibility??
Only mow Council land and charge whoever owns the other land, that you mow.

7.6 Showgrounds

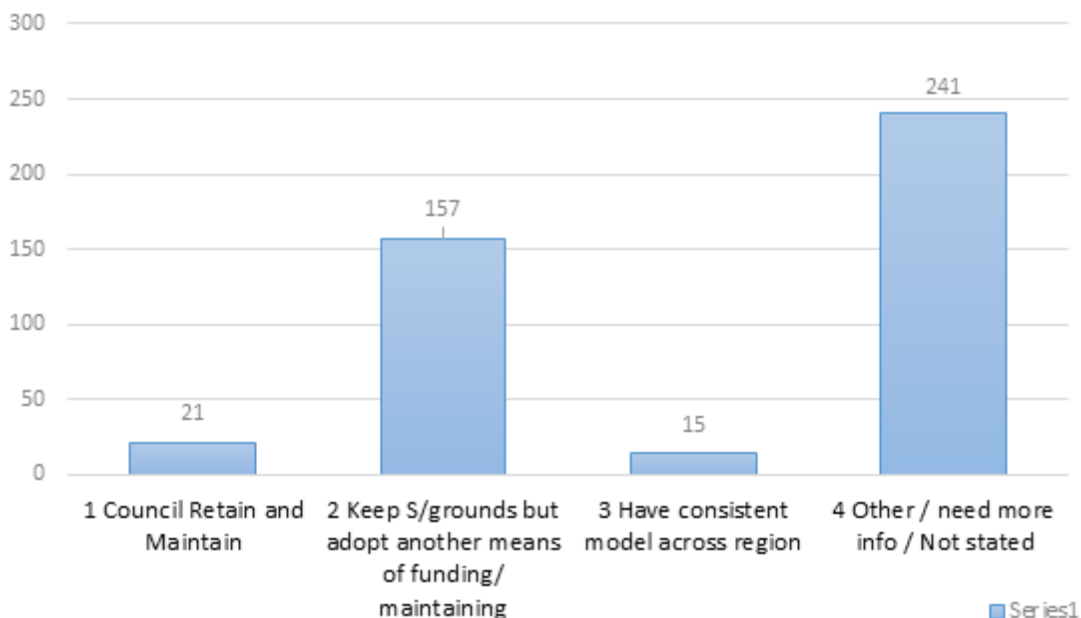
The North Burnett Region hosts 6 showgrounds with varied ownership and management arrangements in place. Councillors asked community about in-principle support to pursue a consistent model of ownership and management of showgrounds across the region.

7.6.1 Sentiment

Responses	Tally	Percentage
Council retain and maintain	21	5%
Keep S/Grounds – adopt other funding model	157	36%
Have consistent model across region	15	3.5%
Other – need more information	241	55.5%

Feedback indicates that community wish to keep showgrounds in each town in the North Burnett as they have served (and continue to serve) a vital function in each community. There was strong support for Show Societies to take on the ownership and responsibility for maintenance of these grounds, however the community would like these decisions made in consultation with each Show Society according to their capacity to do so. The community also saw many opportunities to increase the potential of each showground/facilities to bring revenue to the town. The proposal to have a consistent model across all showgrounds was not fully understood by respondents with over half of the respondents providing no comment or saying they needed more information on what the current arrangements were before being able to comment.

Proposal to Have a Consistent Model for Showgrounds



7.6.2 Themes

- Showgrounds are deemed to be important community assets to each in the North Burnett
- There is a general lack of awareness of ownership arrangements and how showgrounds in the region are funded and managed. 14% of respondents said they needed more information before being able to comment on this topic.
- Many respondents saw an opportunity for Show Societies to become responsible for all associated costs of maintaining the showgrounds - 36% of respondents nominated an alternative means of funding the showgrounds to take the burden off Council.
- 5% of respondents nominated for Council to retain responsibility for showgrounds and seek better utilisation of the space for events to generate income for the towns, community building and tourism opportunities

7.6.3 Challenges and Pain Points

- Show Societies in each town have now been in place for many generations (over 100 years). There is a lot of community sentiment involved in proposing changes to how showgrounds are run which needs to be factored in.
- Each Showground currently has a different ownership arrangement and different circumstances. Some parks are Recreational leases with the State Government – is it possible for the Show Societies to take on this Lease instead of Council?
- Caravan Park owners do not want Council to introduce camping/RV parks in the showgrounds as it would be in direct competition with their business

7.6.4 Suggestions

- Hand over responsibility for all costs of showgrounds to Show Societies (with discussions with each Show Society to work out how best this should happen for each town.)
- Lease agreements with community groups who could then seek grants to undertake maintenance/improvements, and utilise volunteer labour for maintenance
- Convert showgrounds into multi-purpose, multi-user venues to maximise income potential of each space (e.g. hire out to community groups, cater for weddings, sports, concerts, car clubs, rodeos, horse events, markets, camping grounds / RV tourism)
- Seek sponsorship from large national companies with a local stake in town eg Puma, IGA or BP
- Raise teams of volunteers to assist with showground maintenance in each town
- One suggestion called for an amalgamation of District Shows and have 1 Regional Showground - 1 Regional Show
- Use the land to build a retirement village (Monto)

7.6.5 Sample of Comments

All showgrounds should be either given or leased to existing show societies to manage and maintain as long as the community had a functional show society.
Community needs a Showgrounds. Used for various functions throughout the year. Further discussions needed with Show Committee's.
Money could be saved by engaging with local Show Societies to allow them to take control of the stewardship of the towns' showgrounds. All towns in the NBRC have strong Show Societies & I am sure given the "green light" to maintain & improve the facilities, they would be willing to do so.
Sell the showgrounds to a private owner and let them maintain.
Grants, lease arrangements, increase use of Showgrounds facilities.
Council should stop supporting showgrounds. They should be maintained by Show Societies in each community.
The showgrounds should be leased to show committee at their cost.
I can see why all showgrounds should be supported to the same degree in each town.
Sell the showgrounds to the Show Societies, then Council will get the rates and not the upkeep of the facilities.
I suggest that the four local communities that are currently catered for by the Council, be offered the use of the grounds for a small or peppercorn rent on the proviso that all maintenance of grounds & buildings (and erection of any new facilities) are the responsibility of the community.
Council should be making an income from all these Showgrounds.
I don't know what Council does for Showgrounds so can't comment.

7.7 General Comments and Suggestions

<p>Income Sources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19-19 has initiated a migration from cities to regional areas and affords the opportunity to facilitate further development (residential, commercial and tourist) to increase the rate base. This migration will require upgrading of water and sewerage services and provides the basis for requests for special infrastructure improvement grants from both State and Federal Governments. • Sending a Council person (it was usually me) in a helicopter to record the extent and devastation of natural disasters was a very big money winner as we had the video and photos to provide irrefutable evidence of the extent of flooding and devastation to roads and infrastructure. TMR were always trying to minimise flood damage claims and we were able to obtain considerable additional disaster funding. A similar strategy can be used for cyclones, fires, and drought events. • Review Councils fees and charges to ensure the fees cover the costs of the provision of the service. • Review donations and subsidies to minimise such drains on the budget. Perhaps a moratorium on such expenditure until the budget position improves. • Eliminate early payment discounts on rates for the next couple of years • Consider a prepayment of rates scheme so that cash flow will see an early injection of additional funds. It may not suit all ratepayers but those who join in will help offset borrowing to meet Council Commitments.
<p>Workforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of the workforce will be required to match the resources to the available work. This can be tough as Councils are usually a major employer and impact heavily on the local economy. Nonetheless, Council workforces can become top heavy (more supervisors than workers), productivity can be less than desirable, and they can contain waste and inefficiencies. Some key things that can be done are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Match the job needs with the most effective staff. For example, if heavy lifting is required then elderly staff members may not be as proficient as strong young men and women. ○ Review the composition of maintenance and construction teams. There may be a ganger, truck driver and say two labourers. If all work, then it may be possible to reduce the crew to 3 or even two depending on the work required. ○ Is the vehicle fleet fit for purpose? We had a case where two one- tonne vehicles were sent out to service plant because the gear required was more than one tonne. We bought a two-tonne vehicle and needed to send only one mechanic and one truck. • We had a case where all foremen had single cab two-wheel drive utes because they were cheaper to buy. We changed that to twin cab 4WDs so that they could carry crew members and save the need for an additional vehicle. The foremen could, because we had 4000km of gravel roads, undertake inspections on slippery roads in the wet especially for flood damage. As they could not travel on wet damaged slippery roads in 2WD vehicles they were unproductive in the wet season. Sounds ridiculous I know but this is what can happen when the focus is only on the dollars and not productivity and fitness for purpose.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very often senior staff get a vehicle for private use. This is one area which can be abused and can result in vehicles sitting in the Council car park all week and get used only on weekends for golf. It is a rort and if hard decisions are to be made, they must start at the top to maintain credibility. Use vehicle sharing or a vehicle pool system for office staff. Again, ensure the vehicles are fit for purpose. Our lady who promoted the shire was given a ute to carry expensive promotional material, stands etc. She needed a station wagon or van to protect them from rain and theft, but the Council policy said that she was not entitled to a van or station wagon. The vehicle policy is a major way to save money and improve efficiency. Those Council executive staff who wish to protect their rorts while the ship sinks may require an attitude adjustment. • We had single cab trucks which we converted to dual cab to minimise the number of vehicles required to transport workers. • Council should turnover vehicles regularly. With fleet discounts and the high prices of second-hand vehicles, Council can even make money from their vehicle fleet. Townsville regional Council had excellent information on this back in my day and may still do so.
<p>Other Initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby the magistrate to order community service for minor offenders. Council can utilise these people to supplement their workforce at no cost. They can clean graffiti, do parks and gardens etc. It will require a supervisor but if worked well it will augment the workforce at no cost. It may also do wonders for the offender. • Lobby the State Government to provide low risk offenders in the justice system to be employed on Council works subject to their having the relevant skills required. • Lobby the Government to implement work for the dole strategies in regional areas where unemployment is high. • Mackay Council have just implemented a scheme where a landowner can have a number of campsites on his property. The application fee is only \$100 with an annual charge of about \$13 per campsite per year. This is a fantastic initiative to attract budget campers to your region. It not only provides an additional income for struggling property owners but also could boost tourism and provide a catchment for farm workers and Council staff. • Consider a call for volunteer positions within Council. You would know which tasks could be undertaken by volunteers but parks and gardens, cemeteries, town guides etc could be a start. Perhaps a smoko lady who delivers tea and coffee to desks rather than staff having extended smoko and lunch breaks. Others could collect lunches for staff and so on. Many retirees would relish the chance to be productive and get social interaction. • Lobby the Government to release skilled asylum seekers in detention centres to supplement Council staff and to provide support for agriculture. Why import new workers when we have thousands being paid by taxpayers in detention and going crazy? Their wages could be offset by their existing payments making them very affordable employees.

8. Next Steps

This Report will be presented to the General Council Meeting held 30 June 2021 alongside the service delivery review papers.