

MAYOR MARK JAMIESON

ADDRESS TO THE CONCLUDING ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL

10 MARCH 2016

Councillors

- Today we mark the final Ordinary Meeting of our Council which was elected to office on 28 April 2012.
- This is an important day – not just for Council but also for this region – and one that should be appropriately acknowledged.
- Ours is the second Sunshine Coast Council elected since the local government amalgamation in 2008.
- And we should not forget that today, we are two Councillors less than what we were in 2012, due to the deamalgamation process imposed by the Newman government in 2013-2014.
- But we also represent a continuation of the important work done by the men and women involved in the local governance of this region since the late 19th century.
- We have carried forward many of the plans and ideas they established.
- And brought forward and developed many plans and ideas of our own.
- Most importantly, we have taken seriously and respected, the trust placed in us by the people of the Sunshine Coast in 2012 in discharging our role as their elected Council.
- By any measure, we have been a strong, united and effective Council – which is a hallmark of the trust that this community has placed in us.
- A Council which has not shied away from dealing with difficult and complex matters.
- A Council which has made decisions in the best interests of this region and our communities.
- A Council that has – in my view – had the foresight and determination to take the decisions that shape a stronger, more prosperous and more sustainable future for the residents of the Sunshine Coast.
- Both those that live here today and those who will live here tomorrow.

- Decisions like building our own solar farm that will mean by next year, our Council will be offsetting 100% of its electricity needs with energy generated from a renewable source.
- We will be the only Council in Queensland to do so - and what a fantastic way to demonstrate our credentials as Australia's most sustainable region.
- Decisions like pursuing a cable protection zone declaration for the Sunshine Coast.
- An initiative which will fundamentally transform the region's - and Queensland's - economy in the future.
- And our determination to expand our conservation estate – which we have increased by 16% under this Council and more acquisitions are in the pipeline.
- Our conservation estate is one of the greatest assets of this region, protecting sensitive habitat and environmental corridors for generations to come.
- The list goes on and I will come back to some of our important achievements in a moment.
- Firstly however, I want to acknowledge and thank each of you, my fellow Councillors, for your efforts, commitment and dedication over the last four years.
- Your preparedness to work together to progress an exciting agenda that will shape the future of this region is greatly appreciated.
- I have no doubt that history will deal kindly with this Council and applaud the far sighted and innovative work that has been done this term by each of you, to better position the region's economy, social well-being and environmental credentials.
- Secondly, I would also like to acknowledge and thank each of your families.
- Because the roles that we take on impact directly on them and they too have made many contributions and sacrifices along the way.
- Through their own participation in the community and by supporting each of us as we carry out our responsibilities.
- I would also like to acknowledge and thank the Chief Executive Officer and staff of our Council.
- Over 1500 dedicated women and men who work hard every day in serving this community.

- Delivering programs, services and initiatives with professionalism, dedication and their own passion for the region and the work that they do.
- Throughout this term, they have endured the disruption and uncertainty brought about by deamalgamation.
- Yet in the main, they have got on with the job and continued to focus on the customer.
- At this time, I want to particularly acknowledge and pay tribute to the selfless contribution that is made by the thousands of members of our community that contribute to the work and decisions of this Council.
- Councillors, as you know, we have well over 50 different working groups, reference groups, advisory committees and boards that have representatives from right across this community.
- Groups and committees that advise Council on everything from cultural heritage, cycling, environmental programs, how we implement our economic strategy to sourcing major events.
- The members of our community that participate on these groups and provide ideas and professional input – mostly unpaid – are the embodiment of true public service.
- In addition, a number of activities of this Council are supported and made possible by the contribution of a wealth of volunteers from across the region.
- Without the efforts of our volunteers – be it at Council events or assisting at exhibits and facilities – there is much that we could not deliver for this community.
- Without doubt, our greatest asset is our community.
- Their contributions are invaluable – yet unfortunately, this invariably goes unnoticed by a wider audience.
- As we mark the end of this term of Council it is important to reflect on some of the learnings along the way.
- For those Councillors who – like myself – are “first termers”, I am sure you came into this role in 2012 thinking you knew a lot about Council and how to get things done.
- And like me, I suspect that you probably also acknowledge that today, nearly four years on, you know 100 times more that what you did in 2012.
- Our longer term Councillors will no doubt attest to the fact that this is a constant learning journey.

- That every day we learn something new, acquire new information and hear of a different idea or approach that we had not previously contemplated.
- For me, one of the most significant learnings has been around expectations of government.
- I use the term “government” – as opposed to Council – quite deliberately.
- Because the way in which governments at all levels have evolved has shaped community expectations – although some may argue that it should be the other way around.
- Either way, the learnings are much the same.
- As financial challenges emerge and grow, as infrastructure ages or becomes redundant, as society grapples with new challenges – be it digital disruption, domestic violence or the threat of terrorism.
- Increasingly communities across the globe are looking to governments to solve all of these problems.
- The expectations are immense – and cannot ever possibly hope to be fulfilled.
- For our community – and indeed many others - the different responsibilities of all levels of government have become increasingly blurred.
- This is particularly the case as the fiscal position of the Federal and state governments has deteriorated and their ability to deliver the infrastructure and services for which they are responsible has become constrained.
- But for many in the community, they just expect the problem to be solved by “government”.
- A wider highway, a new rail line, better road networks, more public transport, improved education opportunities and increased law and order.
- All perfectly legitimate and reasonable expectations – particularly in a growing community like our own.
- But because we as Council are part of the collective mass that is “government”, we are often looked to as the solution provider.
- Even through the present election campaign, we have candidates who are reacting to these expectations and making commitments that are not the responsibility of Council and which the ratepayer does not have the capacity to fund – and neither should they have to.

- We have to be clear on how we respond to community expectations – and not entrap ourselves in what may seem the easy way out by agreeing to everything.
- Councillors, as we all know, for every public taxation dollar collected here in Australia, 81.5 cents goes to the Federal government, 15 cents goes to the State governments and 3.5 cents goes to local government.
- A massive imbalance I grant you, but it goes to the heart of capacity to fund – and how we deal with community expectations.
- If I have learnt anything in the last four years, it is that we should not unwittingly sign ourselves up for that which is not our responsibility and which is beyond the capacity of our ratepayers to afford.
- We must shoulder our responsibility by advocating hard and consistently for our region.
- We must – and do – provide the rationale and business case to justify why our needs should be prioritised.
- We must be clear with our community where our responsibilities start and finish so they understand why we are not signing them up for something they cannot afford.
- And we must expect – no demand – more from our federal and state representatives here in this region to do the job they were elected to do.
- Because when all is said and done, if you sign up for things that you can't afford – and aren't our responsibility – then pretty soon, you will be broke.
- In my view, not one of the Councillors in this room wants to see that happen to our Council.
- We have worked hard during the last four years to establish one of the strongest and most sustainable Councils in Queensland – if not Australia.
- We have the second highest financial sustainability rating available to Councils – no Council in Queensland is higher.
- We have consistently delivered surpluses to reinvest back in our community.
- And we have been given a clean bill of health every year by the Queensland Audit Office.
- Councillors, our Council is in great shape and none of us want to see that undermined by irresponsibility and political opportunism.

- Before I conclude, I would like to briefly reflect on some of the major achievements of our Council over the last four years.
- It is impossible to cover everything, so I will just touch briefly on those that go to the heart of the agenda we have pursued.
- Things are certainly very different today from when we were elected in 2012.
- We are getting the region's economy back on track after the serious impacts on this region of the global economic downturn.
- We have put in place a clear blueprint for the regional economy, supported by business and industry, other levels of government and the University.
- This is already delivering results, with unemployment lower than the Queensland average, youth unemployment nearly 5% lower than November 2014 and business confidence the highest in the State.
- And over 4000 direct employment opportunities have been created directly as a result of Council initiatives to encourage businesses to expand and our support for local employment.
- We have put the machinery in place to deliver the region Australia's first truly smart city, and work is now underway on the SunCentral site.
- An enormous effort has gone into getting the Environmental Impact Statement finalised for the Airport expansion and identifying the best financing strategy.
- We put in place our new planning scheme – the first ever scheme for the whole Sunshine Coast – providing greater confidence for the community and investors.
- Last year we adopted our new Sunshine Coast Social Strategy – affirming our commitment to supporting our community to continue to thrive and enjoy a lifestyle that sets us apart.
- We have invested more than \$22 million on new or upgraded community facilities across the region to help our residents lead more active, healthy and engaged lives.
- On average, we have committed approximately \$7.5 million in grants each year to community organisations to support the incredibly valuable work that they do.
- We have allocated more than \$180 million since 2012 to improve and maintain our local road network.
- To improve the safety and connectivity of our communities
- We established the Disaster Management Hub – an outstanding resource for our community.

- And we ensured that the new residents at Aura (as it is now known) and Palmview will be provided with the community facilities they will need, without a residual cost to our existing ratepayers.
- Our record on the environments has been very strong.
- As I mentioned earlier, we have Increased Council's conservation estate by 16% to 2838 hectares through the use of the Environment Levy.
- And more acquisitions are in the pipeline.
- Our award winning Land for Wildlife program has become the largest in Australia, with over 900 participating properties.
- We have continued to work hard to improve the health and water quality of the Pumicestone Passage and the Maroochy and Mooloolah River catchments.
- We know more work needs to be done here and we are committed to the task.
- We have advocated strongly on behalf of our community for the enduring protection of the Regional Inter-urban break – even when we had a State government that either wouldn't listen or didn't understand.
- And while the battle is not yet over, I am optimistic that we will win through.
- Councillors, I could go on for another hour and I would still have overlooked something.
- But in the interests of time, I will leave it there.
- Suffice to say while this was only the highlights, the list is impressive.
- This is our legacy to the region from this term of Council.
- One that each of us should be proud to claim.
- Thank you Councillors.

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