

## **MAYOR MARK JAMIESON**

### **ADDRESS TO THE CONCLUDING ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL**

**19 MARCH 2020**

Councillors

Today we meet for the last time as the Sunshine Coast Council for 2016-2020.

Without a doubt this has been an eventful term – a term when both the NRL and Sir Elton John came to the Sunshine Coast.

And a term where our staff, our residents and our region's emergency services personnel have faced some significant natural disasters, like the bushfires of 2019.

But there are many milestones and achievements of which we can all be proud.

While I am conscious that I run the very real risk of overlooking something significant, there are undoubtedly some particular hallmarks of this term.

Council has continued to receive a strong financial sustainability rating from the Queensland Treasury Corporation – and we are one of only three councils out of the 77 councils across Queensland that received this rating.

In addition, our Council has received an unmodified audit opinion from the Queensland Audit Office every year.

Both of which are testament to the responsible and prudent stewardship that we have provided to our Council.

Council has acquired and now manages what is arguably the most extensive local conservation estate in south east Queensland at over 6900 hectares.

We also now host the largest Land for Wildlife program in the country, having reached a milestone this year with over 1100 landowners involved in this program.

What this means is that over 8,800 hectares of privately-owned land – in addition to the 6,900 hectares in our conservation estate – is being managed with conservation objectives in mind.

We have achieved national recognition for a number of our environmental programs, including being the first government in mainland Australia to offset more than 100% of its electricity consumption with energy from Council's solar farm, which we opened in 2017.

Our Council has put in place an Australian-first blue carbon partnership that will help to provide more sustainable land-use options for the Blue Heart, some 5000 hectares within the Maroochy River floodplain – something that all of our predecessor councils failed to do.

We adopted and put in place the region's national award winning Environment and Livability Strategy.

For the first time, our region has a clear and coherent policy platform to guide and shape the sustainable protection and management of our outstanding natural assets and lifestyle and direct our response to a changing climate – thanks to the efforts of our Council.

And we have advanced to the other tiers of government, a nomination for the Sunshine Coast to be declared by UNESCO as a biosphere reserve.

Working with a wide cross section of our community, we have developed and are now implementing our Sunshine Coast Community Strategy.

This provides a blueprint for how we work over the next 20 years with our residents, community organisations, local business and others so that Together we Thrive.

Council has put in place the region's first Arts Plan and established the Sunshine Coast Arts Foundation, to provide an exciting and compelling basis from which the arts and cultural sector can grow and flourish and our local talent is nurtured.

We have completed the \$8.5 million redevelopment of The Events Centre here at Caloundra that will help our region's premier performing arts venue offer a vast array of productions and events that attract attendees from both locally and beyond our region.

Council has allocated over \$63 million over this last term to improve our sport, recreation, performance and other community facilities - all of which provide the opportunity to increase participation by our residents in community life.

We have also implemented major initiatives to boost our reputation as a welcoming community which encourages diversity, such as the establishment of our Multicultural Hub and our Migrant Work Ready Program, along with now hosting around six Citizenship ceremonies each year.

Our Council has implemented the first five-year action plan for our 20 year Regional Economic Development Strategy, from which we have seen significant progress made in strengthening the foundations of our economy and encouraging the creation of over 23,000 new jobs in our high-value industries – providing a wider mix of career paths for local residents.

We have put in place the Caloundra City Centre Master Plan which will provide the foundation for the future development of our City of Beaches.

We have achieved international recognition two years running as one of the Top 7 Global Intelligent Communities, as a result of our commitment to supporting our community to maximise the opportunities of the Digital Century.

Our International Broadband Submarine Cable has come ashore, and this will mean the Sunshine Coast will offer the fastest data and telecommunications connection from the Australian eastern seaboard to Asia when the network goes live in the next month.

We have delivered an outstanding \$605 million deal for our ratepayers in relation to the long-term operation of the Sunshine Coast Airport, enabling the Airport Expansion Project to be delivered at what will be no enduring cost to the ratepayer.

We have opened the first stage of the Maroochydore City Centre and settled sales totaling \$11.4 million, with the first buildings coming out of the ground on this important 20-year project for our region.

And again, unlike any of our predecessors, we are laying the important business case groundwork for State and Federal governments to invest in a much-needed mass transit solution for our rapidly growing Sunshine Coast.

Councillors, the reality is that this is only a microcosm of what we have been able to deliver for our community over the last four years and every one of you should be proud of the legacy of this council.

There are also a plethora of local projects we have delivered right across the region that play an incredibly important role in building the social and economic fabric of our communities.

From the upgrade of the Beerwah Aquatic Centre, to our commitment to the Nambour Heritage Tramway and the Reimagine Nambour project.

From the upgrade of Sippy Downs Drive, to our award-winning Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve Discovery Centre and the streetscaping upgrades in Palmwoods.

Or the Mayes Canal Cycle and Pedestrian Bridge, the Evans Street upgrade at Maroochydore and the commencement of the \$10 million Parklands Boulevard upgrade or the continuation of the Coastal Pathway.

Councillors – as I said earlier, I will no doubt have missed many important achievements and can I assure you, it has not been my intention to do so.

It is just that there are so many to name.

As we complete the term, I would like to acknowledge the excellent assistance and support that have been provided by Council staff in working with Councillors to deliver for our community.

The professionalism, integrity and ideas that are demonstrated by our staff never cease to amaze and inspire me.

I also wish to acknowledge and thank the many thousands of volunteers in our community that work with Council every day to help make our Sunshine Coast the best place in which to live.

From those who volunteered on our Community Reference Group to support our Biosphere Reserve nomination, to those who help deliver our Read and Write for Life program in our Libraries.

From the many dedicated people who help with our turtle care and catchment management programs and activities, to those members who have served on our Sunshine Coast Events Board.

Our achievements would not be possible without the efforts of our volunteers.

Finally, and on a somber note, we conclude this term at a time when our region – in fact the whole world – faces its biggest human, social and economic challenge in over a century.

Of course, I speak of the Covid-19 pandemic, which is impacting on how we live our lives, how we move about in our community, how we work and how we interact with one another.

I won't recite the predictions, but it is fair to say that no community will be left unscathed from this event – and in all likelihood it will prevail for at least the next six months.

What is important is that we come together as a community, support each other, look out for each other, show kindness and consideration.

Now more than ever, we must look out for the most vulnerable in our community and think locally in every decision we make.

While there is much that is being done – and will continue to be done – to keep our community safe and informed, there is one matter that I wish to raise that I think needs attention by us here at our final meeting.

As you know, earlier this week the RSL announced it would be cancelling Anzac Day commemoration services – for the first time ever since the original Gallipoli landing in 1915.

Our community has a deep and ingrained appreciation for the Anzac spirit and legend - and Anzac Day is an event that holds great significance to our residents of all ages and backgrounds.

Given 25 April is just over one month away, I would like to seek your support for Council to work with the RSL so that there are options available that still enable our community to observe Anzac Day in some way.

There are many options that could be considered and I would like to think that at this time, our Council can stand shoulder to shoulder with the RSL and our returned service men and women and support any number of initiatives that still make the observance of Anzac Day possible in our new Covid-19 world.

Councillors, I will leave it there.

Thank you all for your contribution to our Council and to our community.

May I wish each and every one of you every joy and success in whatever your future holds.

I commend this matter to the Chamber and I look forward to your support.

**ENDS**