

Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve Building Renewal Project Community Consultation Report

January 2013 Rev 2

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1. Background and purpose of consultation

The Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve is an iconic centre for conservation, learning, community partnerships and tourism. However, Council staff and the Reserve's community based Management Committee have identified that the main buildings at the Reserve are now aging, unable to meet current needs and require upgrading.

Council engaged a consultant to undertake an independent, comparative assessment of a number of building renewal options, based on environmental, financial, economic and social considerations.

Council then consulted the community on the consultant's report and recommendations to gauge their views on a future operating model and strategic direction for the Reserve's building precinct.

A conscious decision was made to not prepare architectural concepts at this stage, but rather to focus on appropriate building functions, spatial needs and strategic considerations. Having said that, a range of building options, forms and components were put forward as part of the consultation process with the view that feedback about design preferences would inform the consultant brief and the development of concepts during the next step.

Proposals on building design, form, materials and the overall 'look and feel' will be the subject of the next stage of consultation.

2. Consultation process

Consultation commenced on 9 October 2012. The initial consultation period was proposed to be three weeks, closing on 31 October. However, in response to public request, this was changed to 11 November and then to 2 December 2012, extending the consultation period to eight weeks in total.

The consultation activities organised during this period are detailed in **Attachment 1** and included presentations to key stakeholder groups, public drop-in sessions, media releases, and the use of the internet and social media to reach the wider community.

While participation was invited from the whole of the Sunshine Coast community there was a more concerted effort to connect with the Maleny community in recognition of their stronger focus on and more direct interest in the Reserve's future.

3. Participation and response rate

Stakeholder workshops and public drop-in sessions were attended by about 170 people, and comments were noted directly from about 62 people.

Further, Council received 89 emails/letters at the nominated address. While most feedback was submitted by individuals, there were some letters representing the views of interest groups and organisations, such as the Wildlife Preservation Society, Barung Landcare, Sunshine Coast Destination Limited and QLD Garden Expo.

It appears that the bulk of the feedback was provided from within the Maleny – Witta – Montville - Landsborough communities although addresses were not provided in all cases.

Based on the size of these local communities the participation rate is estimated at around 4%, while at the scale of the Sunshine Coast the participation rate would be about 1%. This means that the information analysed in this report only represents the views of a small fraction of the community and should not necessarily be seen as indicative of broader community sentiment.

4. Findings

4.1 Common themes

Comments from each letter and email were noted and grouped into the 24 Issues listed in **Figure 1**. The '*degree of objection / support*' represents the number of people who commented in relation to a particular Issue; the number of individuals signing a letter or email is also accounted for in the score.

The Issues identified from the feedback were then arranged into a range of themes discussed in this section:

- Lack of trust in Council (Issues 1-to-4, Figure 1)
- Look and feel (Issues 5-to-8)
- Building components and functions (Issues 9-to-15)
- Economic and financial issues (Issues 16-19)
- Environmental issues (Issues 20-to-24)

4.2 Lack of trust (Issues 1-to-4)

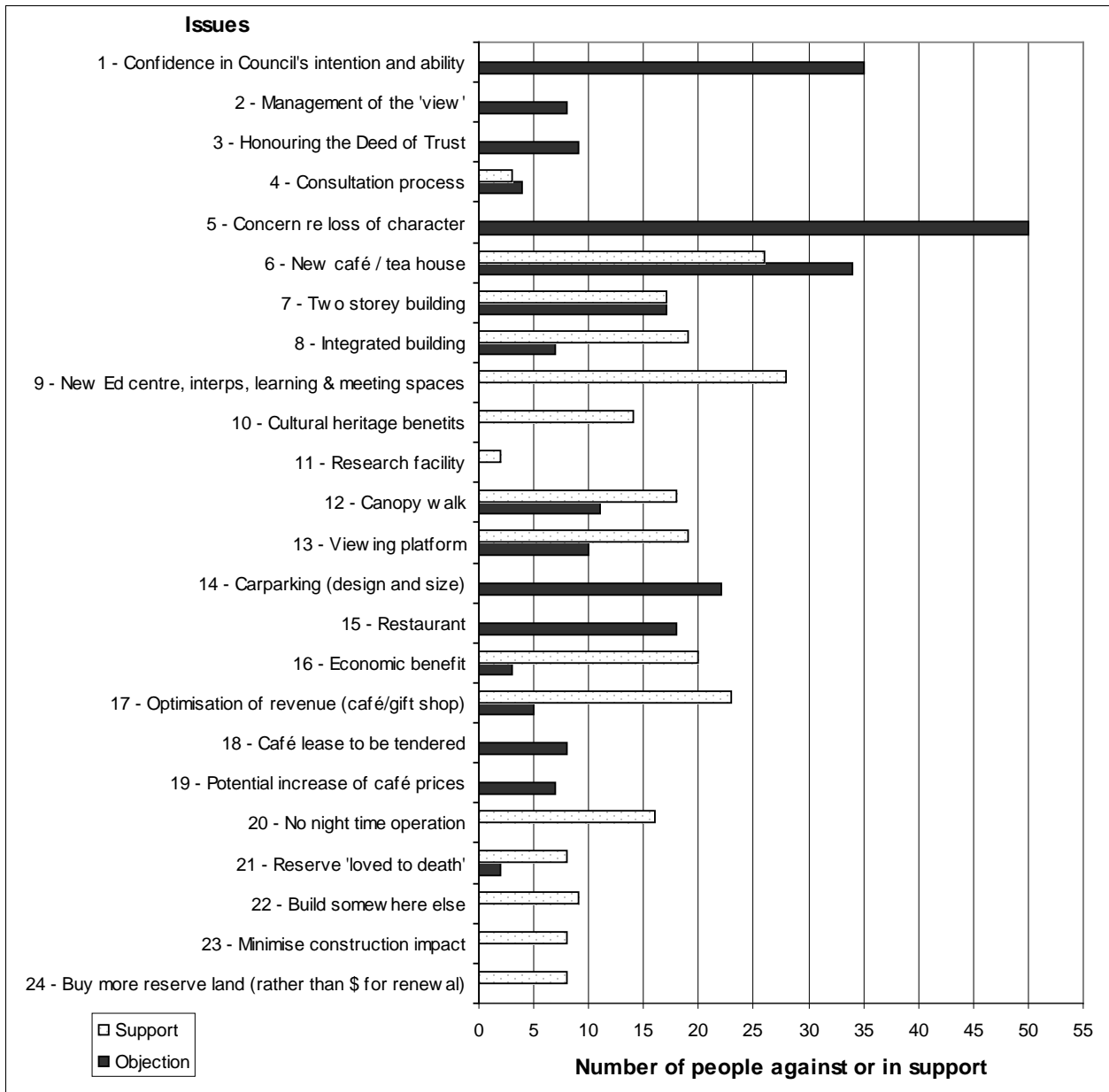
- Issue 1 Considerable lack of trust was expressed in Council's intentions and ability to deliver a positive outcome for the Reserve and community. This appears largely based on matters associated with the Reserve car park redevelopment and negative experiences associated with the Maleny Woolworth development. Some strongly felt (39 respondents) that Council had repeatedly disappointed the Maleny community and therefore this project was also destined to fail so it would be better to do nothing.
- Issue 2 Doubt was expressed by some (8 respondents) in Council's ability to control the view from the facility due to vegetation growth on private land blocking the view of the Glass House Mountains in future.
- Issue 3 Council's intentions were questioned in relation to the Deed of Trust where some (9) felt that Council, in proposing the renewal, was not honouring the Trust's purpose.
- Issue 4 As an extension to lack of trust, some (4 respondents) felt that the consultation was tokenistic and disingenuous.

4.2 Look and feel (Issues 5-to-8)

- Issue 5 In terms of the future 'look and feel' of buildings a considerable number of comments (50 respondents) appeared to stem from a fear of what any new buildings might look like and the potential loss of the much loved existing character and charm of the area.
- Issue 6 Some (34 respondents) felt so passionately about the café that they did not believe that an upgrade was needed or warranted at all and suggested minor refurbishments only. This was balanced by those (26 respondents) who were of the view that the café and kitchen needed replacing, while keeping in with the existing character of the Reserve.

Looking at Issues 5 and 6 together there was a 'loud and clear' message (by 84 people) that the current 'look and feel' of the place must be maintained. In general, concerns expressed included: "*no big shiny (glass and steel) building, no prefabricated utilitarian style modern monstrosity like 'down the coast'*".

Figure 1 – Degree of objection / support (indicative)



Issue 7 In terms of building form, the concept of a two storey building was strongly contested receiving as much support as passionate objections (17 respondents each).

Issue 8 Some on-site stakeholders (including the MCSR Management Committee) were strongly advocating 'pavilion style' development, while the majority (19 respondents) were in favour of an integrated building structure.

Both negative (what respondents didn't want) and positive (preferences) feedback will directly inform the design brief.

4.3 Building components and functions (Issues 9-to-15)

Much of the community's attention during the consultation period was focussed on changes to the café and the potential impact on the current lessee. In part this appeared to be a response to newspaper articles about the café proprietor's concerns, as well as some 'campaigning' by a core group of concerned local residents who have a strong affinity with the existing cafe . Therefore, many people tended to focus their comments on the future of the café, rather than other components of the renewal (eg Education Centre upgrade) and strategic issues concerning the pros and cons for conservation, education, community partnerships and the local and regional economy.

- Issue 9 The proposal to create a new education centre and to integrate and expand interpretive media received uncontested support (by 28), along with the inclusion of learning and meeting spaces.
- Issue 10 The potential cultural heritage benefits were well recognised (by 14).
- Issue 11 The establishment of a research facility received limited consideration (by 2).
- Issues 12-13 Other building components such as the canopy walk and the multi-level viewing platform were passionately debated and, in total, received more support (18 and 19 respectively) than objection (11 and 10).
- Issue 14 The design and size of the existing car park, while not formally part of the scope of consultation, was brought up by many people (22) highlighting that it was problematic and needed to be 'looked at'.
- Issue 15 A significant number of objections (18) were received in relation to the idea of a restaurant, which did not receive any support at all on account of presenting competition to existing businesses in the area.

4.4 Economic and financial issues (Issues 16-to-19)

- Issue 16 Some (3) believed that there would be no economic benefit to be gained from the proposed renewal, fearing that the new facility would compete with existing businesses. This was outweighed by those (20) who thought that the project would give a 'much needed boost' to the local economy, particularly the tourism industry.
- Issue 17 The proposal to optimise revenue from the café and gift shop was strongly debated, some (5) believing that this would lead to unnecessary and unseemly commercialisation ('money grabbing' by Council), while a majority (23 people) supported Council's intent to re-invest any revenue gained from the café and gift shop back into Reserve conservation and management.
- Issues 18-19 As a commercial issue, and in support of the current café proprietor, objection was expressed (by 10) against public tendering of the new café lease, arguing that that the current lessee should be given first option and the perception that the lease fees and café food prices would go up affecting the current lessee and subsequently affordability for patrons.

4.5 Environmental issues (Issues 20-to-24)

- Issue 20 There was unanimous support (16) for not allowing night time operation. The exclusion of night time café operations was presented as a 'given' by Council staff due to environmental and local amenity concerns.

- Issues 21-22 There was concern (by 8) that the Reserve was already being 'loved to death', some even suggesting that the proposed facilities should be built somewhere else
- Issue 23 Some people (8) were cautioning about construction impact; their comments will be taken on board at design and construction planning stage.
- Issue 24 Some (8) suggested that it would be better to direct financial resources towards acquiring more land for the reserve rather than spending it on the renewal project.

4.7 Other relevant issues

Other issues that emerged during the consultation process that bear relevance to the future of the Reserve include:

- The future of the Reserve should not be considered in isolation from other parks and attractions in the region.
- Need to strike a balance between the needs and aspirations of locals and tourist groups.
- Need to investigate what maximum visitor numbers the Reserve can sustain.
- The level of reliance on volunteers is not seen as sustainable, suggesting that Council needs to consider more paid staff on site.

Attachment 1 - Public consultation events

Date	Event / audience	Media	Form of consultation
9-Oct-12	Maleny Chamber of Commerce		Presentation and discussion
9-Oct-12	MCSR Management Committee		Presentation and discussion
9-Oct-12	Friends of MC Association		Presentation and discussion
10-Oct-12	Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve Website and SCRC Website		Presentation material, brochure
10-Oct-12	<i>When the sun goes down the lights go off at Mary Cairncross</i>		<i>Media release</i>
11-Oct-12	Flyers at Library, Maleny Visitor Information Centre, Reserve Café and Ed Centre		Flyers
11-Oct-12	MCSR Volunteers		Presentation and discussion
12-Oct-12	Public drop-in session at the Reserve		Questions and discussion
12-Oct-12	<i>Sunshine FM radio</i> interview with Chris Allan		<i>Radio interview</i>
16-Oct-12	Tourism Qld, SC Destinations, Regional Development Australia		Presentation and discussion
16-Oct-12	Jinibara People (first point of consultation: 11 July 2012 in site meeting format)		Letter and brochure
16-Oct-12	Barung Landcare, Lake Baroon Catchment Care Group, Richmond Birdwing Rec Network, Rotary, Apex, Maleny Historical Society, USC, Schools		Letter and brochure
17-Oct-12	Public drop-in session at the Reserve		Questions and discussion
18-Oct-12	Public drop-in session at the Reserve		Questions and discussion
18-Oct-12	<i>The Range News: Future plans for valuable reserve and Council ad</i>		<i>Article and paid ad</i>
22-Oct-12	Public drop-in session at the Reserve		Questions and discussion
24-Oct-12	Hinterland Tourism SC meeting with President		Discussion
18-Oct-12	<i>The Range News</i> media release and paid ad		<i>Promotion</i>
23-Oct-12	<i>Sunshine Coast Daily: Popular reserve in for major makeover</i>		<i>Promotional article</i>
27-Oct-12	Good Neighbours Day at MCSR		Presentation (abridged) and discussion
29-Oct-12	Public meeting (organised by community representative) attended by Council staff		Questions and discussion
30-Oct-20	Council Facebook post		Promotion

1-Nov-12	Mountain View News (distributed to volunteers, neighbours and other stakeholders) newsletter	Promotion
1-Nov-12	The Range News: Revamp to lift reserve	Article
2-Nov-12	<i>Have your say on Mary Cairncross upgrade</i>	Media release
8-Nov-12	Hinterland Tourism SC meeting of the Executive	Presentation (abridged) and discussion
15-Nov-12	The Range News: Concerns raised over development and Deed not contravened	Article and interview with Cr McKay, and paid ad
21-Nov-12	Maleny Rotary	Presentation and discussion
22-Nov-12	Public drop-in session at the Reserve	Questions and discussion
29-Nov-12	The Range News: Café's spirit at risk (interview with current lessee)	Article
2-Dec-12	Close of consultation period	
6-Dec-12	The Range News: Change needed	Letter to the Editor
9-Dec-12	Sunshine Coast Daily: Maleny group fighting upgrade to Cairncross	Article