

## **Douglas Shire Sustainability Group**

### **Presidents Report – 2007/08**

Following the AGM held in November 2007, the position of President remained vacant. At the first meeting of the committee following the AGM, Neville St. John-Wood agreed to step up to the position and was duly elected by the committee. Similarly, Qamar Schuyler stepped into the role of secretary, as this position was not filled at the AGM either.

From the DSSG's perspective it was a relatively quiet year as community attention was very largely diverted by the appalling outcomes of the Local Government reform process which saw our Douglas Shire taken over by the Cairns City Council.

It was not by any stretch of the imagination a merger of the two councils.

Much of the lead on this issue was taken by the Friends of Douglas Shire and therefore DSSG did not consider it appropriate to take carriage with this issue for two reasons;

1. the issue is outside the charter of DSSG and;
2. the issue was being more than adequately responded to by the FODS.

The DSSG did however agree to establish a bank account on behalf of the FODS to properly manage fund raising efforts by that group in it's fight to seek de-amalgamation for the Douglas Shire.

The DSSG Committee strongly supports the efforts of the FODS and it is hoped this will continue to be the case especially now as a State Government Election has been announced.

In the lead up to the 2008 Local Government Elections DSSG conducted a survey candidates for Division 10 and Mayoral candidates and published the results in the Port Douglas & Mossman Gazette. This was an apolitical initiative designed to assist voters in Division 10 to assess the calibre of the candidates and their position on a range of issues of importance to our membership.

Turning to the more traditional responsibilities of the DSSG.

Throughout the course of the year DSSG was a very vocal contributor to the drafting of the State Governments Iconic Legislation. The DSSG's efforts included drafting and distributing a survey to members, preparing a submission to Government and attending Stakeholder meetings to further input into the draft legislation. DSSG was represented at these stakeholder meetings by Roisin

Allen, Robert Hanan and Ken Dobbs.

DSSG membership was also ably represented by committee member Toni McNamara on the Project Advisory Group for the Port Douglas Waterfront Inquiry by Design process,. This process is ongoing and Toni has continued to be a great representative of the membership in this important forum.

The DSSG membership was also well represented in a Clean-Up Australia Day event in March 2008. This event was co-ordinated on behalf of DSSG by member, Jan Buchanan.

Roisin Allen established a local Freecycle Group and continues as promoter and moderator of this web-based recycling initiative, which has resulted in many items being exchanged, thereby keeping them out of landfill.

The DSSG was also a participant in the International Year of the Reef expo in October 2008, contributing to an information booth in the port Douglas Community Hall. Our secretary Qamar Schuyler took a key role in organising this event.

We made representations in relation to the proposal for the construction of a new building for the Qld. Police on the Port Douglas Waterfront. Obviously to no avail.

Similarly we made representations to the State Govt and Cairns Regional Council regarding the removal of trees as part of this construction. Again this was to no avail.

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) was questioned over their proposal to allow environmental offsets in relation to further expansion of the Wonga Beach Fish Farm. Unfortunately no information has been forthcoming.

During the course of the year DSSG made a submission to the State Government in respect of proposals for a State Coastal Management Plan.

We also made representations to the State Minister for Planning in respect of a decision by the former Douglas Shire Council to approve a development application for a service station/food outlet at Craiglie, suggesting that it was contrary to provisions of the Douglas Shire Planning Scheme. Unfortunately, this too was to no avail.

DSSG put its' support behind former Mayor, Mike Berwick, participating in Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's 2020 Summit in Canberra mid 2008. We also offered financial support to an indigenous representative, Hazel Douglas, to attend the summit, however, this was not required.

Members of the group were invited to and participated in a work shop on environmental legislation in Qld, conducted by the Environmental Defenders Office.

Representations were made, and a submission conveyed, in respect of the 2025 Regional Plan and it's potential impacts on the former Douglas Shire area and in particular in an attempt to try to ensure that the Regional Plan supported the Douglas Shire Planning Scheme. This outcome has largely been realised.

DSSG made a submission to the GBRMPA to encourage the funding of a study on the composition of the Grey Mackerel fish stocks and local catch rates. This was in response to concerns brought to the committee's attention that Grey Mackerel fish species are under threat from over fishing.

In mid 2008, DSSG was approached by Tangaroa Blue to sponsor a Community Coast Care Project grant application to the Federal Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts for a Marine Debris Survey.

Only in the last couple of weeks have we been advised of an offer of a grant of \$35000, which the committee only today agreed to accept.

The DSSG also partnered with Tangaroa Blue to present a deputation to the Cairns Regional Council for it's support for this project.

Still on the subject of the Cairns Regional Council, the DSSG has supported Division 10 Councillor, Julia Leu, on a range of issues of importanc to the former Douglas Shire, not least of which is the initiative to document a Daintree Coast Community Plan, which the former Douglas Shire had well advanced but which now seems to have disappeared into the mire with the advent of the Cairns Regional Council takeover.

Throughout 2007/08 DSSG has continued its memberships of Terrain Natural Resource Management, the Environmental Defenders Office and the Queensland Conservation Council as well as continuing to work closely with CAFNEC.

An application has been submitted for DSSG to participate in the IGA Supermarket Community Chest in an attempt to bolster DSSG's revenue.

Finally, on behalf of the President, I wish to express my appreciation for the hard work contributed all year by all the members of the DSSG Committee. There are still many issues of relevance to, and which requires the vigilance of, a group like the DSSG, which could threaten the sustainability of the Douglas Shire areas into the future.

I also wish to thank all members for continuing to support DSSG both financially

and with the contribution of ideas and opinions of issues of concern to us all.

I would encourage all interested members to consider nominating for a position on the committee for 2008/09.

David G. Carey  
Treasurer

On behalf of Neville St. John Wood  
President

25 February 2009.