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Ms Rachel Brophy
Chief Executive Officer
Douglas Shire Council

Via email: rachel.brophy@douglas.qld.gov.au, enquiries@douglas.qld.gov.au

Dear Madam

RE: AQUATIC PRECINCT FEEDBACK

Douglas Shire Sustainability Group Inc. (DSSG) is an incorporated association active in the Douglas Shire since 2005, in support of sustainability in this region.

DSSG is a community-based environmental advocacy organisation whose objects are:

- To promote and encourage the adoption of the principals of ecologically sustainable development to all sectors of the community throughout the Douglas Shire;
- To the protection and conservation of the unique environment in the Douglas Shire and its surrounds, including the Great Barrier Reef, the Wet Tropics and World Heritage areas;
- To promote social, economic and environmental balance;
- To promote and support environmentally sustainable practices, education and great environmental awareness amongst visitors to and residents of the Douglas Shire;
- To recognise and promote the sustainable practices of the traditional owners of the Douglas Shire; and
- To promote and encourage the adoption of the principles of ecologically sustainable development to all sectors of the community throughout the Douglas Shire.

Our members have provided some feedback, and we have formed a view on the issues of

- The preferred location for and look and feel of a splash park, and
- Level of support for a public swimming facility in Port Douglas and whether people want a 50 metre lap pool, or free form lagoon.

In summary, we do not believe a purpose built splash park, at either of the identified sites, is necessary. We do not support a need for a public swimming facility in Port Douglas. We note that a large amount of accommodation and residential properties in the town have access to swimming pools that can provide splash and paddling activities for children and swimming for all. Council already supports, at rate-payer expense, a well-equipped suitable swimming pool in the Shire.

Funding and costs

We note that Council has secured funding to deliver a splash park in Port Douglas by May 2024, and that there is no funding available for additional facilities.

The splash park is said to be 'fully funded' including by way of grant and some portion of the \$1.2 million capital amount being contributed from Douglas Shire Council Capital Works – that is, from rate-payers funds which could be allocated elsewhere, arguably to better effect. For example we are aware that playgrounds are required in many parts of the Shire.

Operating costs for the splash park are estimated at \$110,000 per annum – again rate-payers funds that could arguably be better spent elsewhere, and representing 0.3% of rates, presumably funded by way of rate rise.

The projected capital and operating costs for a swimming facility are not acceptable, representing significant rate rises for rate payers.

Locations

Development of Reynolds Park is undesirable as it is very visible from the access road, exposing all the equipment which goes with a splash park. Parking would need to be enhanced / provided – adding more concrete to the environment. It is an ideal location for planting as a 'forest park' – providing much needed shade and lowering temperatures.

In our view, a beach location is the best place for a splash park if one is to be constructed. Alternatives to the concrete and plastic vision could include safe (patrolled and stinger net) water's edge play area at four mile beach and/ or market park opposite Sugar Wharf. Such alternatives, carefully developed to not visually detract from the existing natural environment and with safety considerations met, could provide the additional, safe spaces for small children and families to enjoy.

Building in Jalunbu Park requires lots of fill, avoidance or change to the waterway and the sacrifice of large Melaleuca trees – part of the remnant littoral forest. We do not support this site for any development – perhaps Council could plant more shade trees.

We need to keep our natural open park like spaces – these provide public health benefit.

Look and Feel

The whole aquatic precinct notion seems to be inconsistent with the qualities that attract most people, visitors and residents to Port Douglas - its 'small town' undeveloped and natural environment.

If a splash park, as described by the Fact Sheet, is to be built we would prefer it is small and presented naturally – minimal concrete, plastic and fossil fuels.

Yours sincerely

Didge McDonald
President

CC: Mayor and Councillors

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