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## **MEDIA RELEASE – DAINTREE FERRY PROPOSAL TO PROCEED**

This week Douglas Shire Councillors considered the results of its recent survey about options for crossing the Daintree. The survey results confirm the views of DSSG members that a bridge is neither required nor desired and that this community prefers conservation over development. Two thirds of those surveyed said they preferred a two ferry system.

DSSG welcomes the decision to proceed with the contract negotiations for a new solar ferry and a backup ferry for busy times, as the agreed method for crossing the Daintree River.

President of DSSG, Didge McDonald said members are angry that Douglas Shire Council has wasted time and money on this survey. “The previous Council had examined the issues extensively and made good decisions – we are still not clear why this was the new Council’s first action – what interests were at play”, said Mr McDonald.

“This expensive exercise has returned the result we expected, said Mr McDonald. “The community has spoken, the environment matters, and Councillors must respect that decision.”

Although the final motion was passed unanimously, it was not an easy road for Councillors. DSSG was surprised to see a last minute amendment to the motion to renew negotiations for a ferry contract. The Mayor moved this amendment on introduction of the item, saying that discussions that morning had resulted in an amendment to require the negotiated contract be returned to Council for consideration before execution. The amendment appeared to take some Councillors by surprise, however no debate ensued prior to voting on the amendment, which was passed unanimously.

In moving the amended motion, the Mayor said he and other Councillors wanted visibility of contract conditions, performance indicators and penalties for failure to deliver to be included in the contract, prior to its execution.

It was clear during the discussion of the amended motion that no Councillor was pleased with the motion or the outcome, and at least two disagree with the survey findings. Given the procedural irregularities and the expectations of at least two Councillors regarding the contract negotiation process, DSSG wonders if this is the end of the issue.

Councillor McKeown was critical about the consultation process and the lack of complete financial information included in Council materials. He said he was unhappy with the outcome of the

consultation, and said he was not prepared to support the Mayor's motion until the amendment was made.

Councillor Zammataro said it was clear the majority of people in the Shire are in favour of protecting the special environment of the Daintree. Councillor Noli labelled the process 'a costly and time wasting exercise', as it returned a result widely expected or known.

Councillor Scomazzon indicated she was very unhappy at the process adopted for dealing with the consultation report, saying she expected an opportunity to discuss the report in an open meeting as indicated in the agreed consultation process; before being asked to make a decision on the options. She said this was 'not an open and transparent process'. Councillor Scomazzon said the amendment put forward by the Mayor was made without consultation, and she felt 'blinded' by the process. Although she said she 'didn't care' what option was chosen in the end, Councillor Scomazzon expects that 'all permits' would be in place prior to proceeding to sign a contract. This would include environment, planning, construction and dredging permits.

DSSG urges Councillors to act on the wishes of the vast majority of our community who do not want a bridge across the Daintree River.

Contact for comment:

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Link to survey results [Two-ferry option preferred - Douglas Shire Council](#)

[Link to video of Council meeting](#)