Cardwell reconstruction on track

The huge Cardwell reconstruction project – reconstructing Cardwell – is well on track, with detailed design work underway.

Public consultation sessions were held in Cardwell during October and November to gather feedback on concept designs for the foreshore reconstruction and Victoria Street. They were well attended. This feedback is now being used by the project team working on the detailed design.

Work on this project, which involves reconstructing the foreshore and reconstructing Victoria Street in its existing two-lane format, will be completed by the end of June 2013.

A Department of Transport and Main Roads spokesman said there were no plans for a bypass as part of this project, and no plans to widen Victoria Street to four lanes.

Meanwhile, following early public consultation a design brief has been drafted for the restoration of Clump Point Jetty at Mission Beach and Dunk Island Jetty. Design tenders will be called once the consultation is completed.

Construction work continues apace

It’s been 12 months since Cyclone Yasi and while there is still a lot of work to do, we have all achieved so much.

When it comes to our public buildings, roads and other structures, substantial progress has been made.

The rebuild and repair process is enormous. Council is dealing with more than 1500 separate insurance-related works (plus thousands of sign replacement jobs) and has an additional 852 submissions on the books for funding from the State and Federal governments’ Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements.

These relate to everything from buildings and roads to culverts, bridges, jetties and coastal parks.

The good news is many community buildings, including halls, toilet blocks and undercover areas, have been repaired.

The Tully Showgrounds now has a completed Stan Mackay Pavilion among others, and community halls at Tully Heads, Cowley Beach, Mission Beach and Cardwell are in operation again after extensive repairs. Kuirrime Beach Hall’s overhaul will be finished once a new floor has been laid (the floor works were delayed so Christmas celebrations could take place there).

Mission Beach’s Meals on Wheels building is back to normal and repaired toilet blocks include those at Mission Beach, Tully, Silkwood and El Arish. The Tully Heads, Hall Heads and Japoonville blocks are under repair.

Council is awaiting funding approvals for extensive reconstruction work to be completed across the region under Natural Disaster Recovery and Relief Arrangements.

The 852 detailed submissions for funding have been grouped into 55 packages, which are reviewed by chartered accountants KPMG before being sent to the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. Work can begin once the submissions have been thoroughly scrutinised and approvals have been granted.

One package, for the Cardwell Esplanade reconstruction work, was approved by the end of last year. Many other packages are expected to have been approved by the Queensland Reconstruction Authority, or ticked off by KPMG, by the time this newsletter is circulated.

To get to this stage, Council officers have undertaken more than 5500 site inspections, and the extensive submission and approval process, required under the funding guidelines, has taken more than 22,000 hours.

Council is applying for $173 million in funding to cover asset renewal and replacement works, initial urgent works and disaster response costs.

The massive reconstruction phase is expected to continue for another two years, but is well underway.
Farewell to Innisfail but QRA’s work goes on

The Queensland Reconstruction Authority office in Innisfail operated for just a year and a day after Cyclone Yasi took the Cassowary Coast by storm, but the work its members achieved in that short time was phenomenal.

Now that phase of the QRA recovery work here in the north is accomplished and as North Queensland Director Mike Keating, whose regular columns have appeared in this newsletter, explains, the role of the QRA transitions more to technical work relating to critical infrastructure.

“Our time QRA supported communities from instillal to Cairns to Townsville and some in the Atherton Tablelands,” Mr Keating said.

He has been greatly encouraged by the number of people who committed to recovery work, saying that on one day alone it was reported that over 3000 people from outside agencies were here assisting in the Cassowary Coast region.

Mr Keating said there was no doubt the initial influx of people and resources helped the response which has continued since the cyclone, and he acknowledged the many people QRA has worked with on reconstruction work on a continual basis.

“Over the journey one issue that became clear to me is the great work of the community recovery workers in assisting people to initially respond and then to rebuild their lives,” he said.

“Others worthy of special recognition were community members who worked so hard to ensure local community celebrations continued throughout the year.

“These localised events bring communities together and have proved extremely valuable to the recovery process as they allowed people to see the community was recovering and it was possible to look to the future.”

While no-one wants to revisit the challenges of 2011, we know there will be different challenges in the future which will come through if we take action now to ensure preparations, develop resilience, take a team approach and have realistic expectations.

“Patience is important at these times too.”

Chief Superintendent Mike Keating
Director, QRA North Queensland

Above: This stall has been a familiar sight at regional community markets over the past months. CDQ Greg Comerford (right) is happy to answer any of your questions.

Building awareness and with it, the confidence and ability to cope in situations such as cyclones, is important. “Being ready for a disaster if it strikes and being prepared to be self-reliant for up to five days is a necessity in a region prone to cyclones,” Cassowary Coast Regional Council Community Development Officer (CCDO) Greg Comerford said.

“Hopefully, there won’t be a cyclone, but if one is imminent it is important to be prepared early, have a household management plan and have made the all-important decision about whether to stay or go.”

“As apart from anything else, if you are well prepared there is so much less stress that you have to go through.”

To get this vital message out, over the past two months Greg has been part of 20 community meetings and launched a series of stands at community markets to help raise awareness.

He said the market days were very successful with the preparedness message going out, along with a better understanding of the Local Disaster Management Group’s work.

At the markets, Greg also showed people survival and evacuation kits, gave out written information and talked with children and adults about their concerns.

“Understanding what is important to everyone in the family young and old, at a time like this does reduce tensions,” he said.

“I’ve been really impressed by the number of people who have contacted me or come along to talk about how to be better prepared.”

Community solidarity at times of disaster is also vital, Greg said.

“People helping each other out, neighbours checking on neighbours and the vulnerable, knowing where to go for safety, sharing where necessary, all this can help people get through and will help build a stronger community.”

He said some communities have already put together cyclone preparedness plans to suit their particular situation, in flood prone areas for example.

People will be seeing, and hearing, a lot more Art of Living courses, designed to help reduce those demands,” he said.

In the case of such an emergency the community liaison representatives will provide information to the Disaster Coordinating Group, said community liaison representatives volunteering their services from Kurrimine and Silkwood would provide an important communication link between their communities and the Local Disaster Management Group which comprises emergency services, senior council staff and other state government departments.

“We hope to have this scheme up and running in each community as soon as possible because communication is always an issue following every moderate to major disaster,” Ms Washbourne said.

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"Patience is important at these times too. If we take action now to ensure preparations, it is possible to look to the future. See the community was recovering and it was together and have proved extremely valuable to recovery workers in aiding people to initially respond and then to rebuild their lives," he said.

"These localised events bring communities throughout the year. Over the journey one issue that became clear is that of people who have contacted me or come along to talk about how to be better prepared." Community solidarity at times of disaster is also vital, Greg said.

"People helping each other out, neighbours checking on neighbours and the vulnerable, knowing where to go for safety, sharing where necessary, all this can help people get through and will help build a stronger community."

He said some communities have already put together cyclone preparedness plans to suit their particular situation, in flood prone areas for example.

People will be seeing, and hearing, a lot more of Greg in the next few months. "This is a time which makes huge demands on people and we are here to advise and help people through those demands," he said.

Greg can be contacted on 0427 590 935 or email at disastercoord@ccrc.qld.gov.au. Ms Washbourne can be contacted on 07 4034 8864 and email at disastercoord@ccrc.qld.gov.au.

"The wind is really noisy and all the warnings on radio and television make it more scary. I would like more children’s programs to make our mind off the storm and help us be less scared."

Braydon O’Neill, 9, Inntislack

"He's doing a great job of looking after us. He's a good man and he's doing a good job."

Finlay Chilcott, 5, Mission Beach

"If there’s a cyclone coming and you are evacuated you need to go to a safe place like my Grandmas. Your dad has to nail up a roof and not go too worried about outside."

Reese McNamara, 5, Tully

"We should stay inside and keep our dog Daisy safe which will be good cause I will have someone to play with and not get too worried about outside."

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"If they have to be evacuated and have nowhere else to go, people need to be able to get to a safe cyclone shelter on higher ground."

"We sheltered in the new hall at Murray River Upper School. It was very strong but I thought how we should have a plan – where do we go if this roof comes off?"

Abbey Garden, 11, Murray Upper

"If, heaven forbid, such a catastrophic event should ever occur again, we know much more and can be much better prepared," she said.

The commemorative gatherings held in the region celebrated resilience as well as the anniversary of one of the biggest cyclones in living memory.

"It is good to remember, and there are times for remembering, but it is also good to go forward," she said.

"The region’s recovery is well on track."

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"Become a community liaison rep"

A commemorative service and family fun day held in the Cassowary Coast marked the anniversary of Cyclone Yasi, one of the most powerful cyclones to cross the coast since records began.

"It is just a year since the cyclone and for many people this has been an exceptionally hard year, but people have pulled together, there has been a strong community spirit, and much has been achieved," said Julie Murphy, Council Executive Officer, Recovery.

"People are to be congratulated – for their stoicism, their courage, and for the fact that so many people were out of their way to help others through this period, even though often they themselves had their houses or other property badly damaged."

"There is so much to reflect on. No lives were lost here in the region for which we are all thankful, and much has been achieved," Ms Murphy said much had been learned in the aftermath of Cyclone Yasi.

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