

appendix 4 – Community Engagement Strategy (Communications Plan)



Cairns Cultural Precinct Communications Strategy

FINAL DRAFT

Produced by Georgina Vincent & David Donohue
Queensland Corporate Communication Network Pty Ltd

For the Cairns City Council

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Executive Summary

This document sets out an overall communications strategy to be implemented over the next 12 months for the Cairns Cultural Precinct. It is a working document that aims to give the region's residents and stakeholders a sense of ownership in the Precinct and excitement about the facilities that are being designed. This strategic framework must now go to an approved advertising agency for the next stage of the process - creative application complemented by effective media buying to reach the target markets.

The Cairns Cultural Precinct is the most significant new infrastructure project being planned for the Cairns Region now and in the foreseeable future. The Precinct and its facilities will add an exciting new dimension to the region's tourism offering, taking it beyond the traditional "reef and rainforest", by offering diverse cultural performances, displays and a permanent museum. It will provide much-needed economic stimulus in the form of around 1000 jobs in the short to medium term planning and construction, as well as hundreds of additional jobs and other economic flow-ons for existing and new businesses during the operational phase.

Most importantly as far as Cairns Regional Council ratepayers are concerned, the precinct will create state-of-the-art facilities for the use and enjoyment of young and older residents, now and in the future. Facilities of such a high calibre are not currently available in or around Cairns.

However, the many positives have largely been lost in a year-long media debate that has been critical of the planned centre, the Council, and the estimated cost of new cultural facilities. Some high profile critics have publicly stated that all Government allocated money should be re-allocated to improve essential services.

Independent research conducted late last year highlighted interesting findings, not the least of which was that the vast majority of residents surveyed are in FAVOUR of a new cultural or performing arts facility. There was overall agreement among those surveyed that the facilities are needed for Cairns and region, and there was an awareness of the major benefits to the region. The survey also highlighted however a sense that the community has not been fully involved nor kept informed of what is happening. The research showed the question "what's in it for me?" has not been adequately answered for many people. There also remain questions over the financial implications for ratepayers and whether the money would be better spent on more urgent needs like health or education.

The survey findings prove that past consultation and communications efforts have not reached the majority, or their effectiveness has been thwarted by a minority whose vocal media presence has prevented the real messages from getting to the people who matter. The perceived lack of communication has led some residents to become disenfranchised with the project to the point either of disinterest or even negativity, while others are still asking for the facts.

To get the project "back on track", there is a need to more effectively communicate to and engage directly with local residents, as well as grassroots stakeholders as diverse as small dance groups, big business and influential local groups. They need to be made feel a part of the project and excited about the opportunities it presents to them. They need to see and feel "what's in it for them".

As a priority they need to be shown:

- ❖ What's in it for them and for the Cairns region;
- ❖ The project to date and what else is planned;
- ❖ The opportunities this will present for the Cairns region as well as for individual residents, their children, community organisations and schools;
- ❖ The planning process that has been and will be employed;
- ❖ That stakeholders' views are welcomed, will be taken into consideration, and that they will have the chance to offer input;

- ❖ What stakeholders have told the project team so far (get feedback on the feedback); and
- ❖ That independent research late last year showed most residents want a new performing arts facility but need more information and involvement in the project.

There must be a constant stream of public information stating the facts to date, project updates and milestones during the next year. Simultaneously there must be a readily accessible avenue for people to have a say, whether as individuals or groups, in a formal or informal way. There must also be a means by which stakeholders and individuals can have their concerns answered or addressed.

This communications strategy outlines the process for the next 12 months to communicate with the wider community and stakeholder groups about what has happened in the past and what is happening as stages progress. It is a working document that will be reactive to any issues or project milestones, and will be amended as required.

It highlights the stakeholders who must be communicated with and consulted; and sets out an extensive list of key messages that must form the basis of all dialogue with the public and interest groups. We recommend that as any further project milestones are reached, further key messages are created specifically for that milestone and any issues that may arise. Many will already be covered in the over-riding key messages but some are impossible to predict at this stage.

The strategy also outlines our recommendations for key methods to effectively communicate with residents and other stakeholders.

As more detailed design stages of the Cairns Cultural Precinct begin, separate specialist consultation will be undertaken to gather detailed feedback from stakeholders on design features and requirements.

This document has been prepared using information and survey research findings to date.

Key Relevant Research Findings:

Independent research conducted late last year shows:

- ❖ 86% of people believe the region and residents' children need and deserve a new arts and entertainment centre.
- ❖ Respondents do not recognise the benefits to them as individuals but understand the economic benefits to the region.
- ❖ 43% of those surveyed knew nothing or very little about the Cairns Cultural Precinct.
- ❖ There is an overall lack of awareness or impact from previous Council communications. The story hasn't got out to grassroots levels.
- ❖ Cost is a factor, with a concern that rates will rise or that money should be spent on other more important things such as health or education.
- ❖ Flooding of the proposed site was considered a factor (probably more relevant now given the Queensland flooding this year as well as Cyclone Yasi).
- ❖ A small minority are vocal in opposition but the majority are in favour of a cultural facility.

Overarching Communications Goals: Immediate and Ongoing

- ❖ To engage residents in plans for the Cairns Cultural Precinct: to give them a sense of ownership and enthusiasm in the project.
- ❖ To tailor specific answers to various community groups to the question: “what’s in it for me?”;
- ❖ To inform individuals and groups what has happened so far on the project and what is happening now;
- ❖ To inform about ongoing project milestones as they happen;
- ❖ To answer any criticism with real facts;
- ❖ To identify and engage with potential ambassadors and get them positively promoting the Cairns Cultural Precinct as spokespeople or ambassadors;
- ❖ To ensure residents and all stakeholder groups are - and feel they are - a meaningful part of the planning process;
- ❖ To gain residents’ and stakeholder feedback on how the Precinct can meet their needs now and in the future;
- ❖ To bridge the gap of understanding between community desire for a performing arts centre and what is on offer from the Cultural Precinct project;
- ❖ To consult with the community on the two design concepts produced by the final architectural team;
- ❖ To communicate the final chosen design.

Key Stakeholders:

- ❖ Project Control Group
- ❖ Cairns Regional Councillors
- ❖ Cairns Regional Council (CRC) Management
- ❖ CRC Staff
- ❖ Residents of the Cairns Regional Council area such as parents of school-aged children, tradespeople, young adults, and older residents
- ❖ Residents of Port Douglas, the Daintree and beyond; residents of Gordonvale, Edmonton, Babinda and beyond
- ❖ Adjoining local government areas
- ❖ Indigenous and Multi-Cultural groups
- ❖ Residents of the Pacific Rim for whom Cairns is the major centre
- ❖ Self-nominated stakeholders who have already registered their interest in the Cairns Cultural Precinct
- ❖ Ports North as consent authority

- ❖ Business community ie. Cairns Chamber of Commerce, Cairns Business Women's, Cairns Convention Centre Management, Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA), Advance Cairns
- ❖ Arts community ie. Cairns Eisteddfod Committee, Arts Queensland, Tanks, JUTE, COCa, KickArts, Arts Nexus, Aboriginal Centre for Performing Arts
- ❖ Tourism industry ie. TTNQ, Cairns Convention Bureau, Tourism Queensland, Port Douglas and Daintree Tourism Association
- ❖ Indigenous groups
- ❖ State and Federal MPs
- ❖ Relevant State and Federal agencies / departments
- ❖ Local Media
- ❖ Schools (Cairns, Port Douglas and region), JCU, TAFE – this must include students, teachers and parents, and particularly performing arts teachers
- ❖ Local arts groups – smaller dance groups, dance schools, other performing / musical arts groups in and around Cairns and Port Douglas
- ❖ Local architects (short-term with regards to the design process)
- ❖ Others who may register their interest or be identified as the project continues.

Key Messages:

The following key messages have been divided into sections for ease of use. As an immediate priority, these key messages – and specifically those about the Precinct, the location and the design – will be complemented by emotive imagery and appealing creatives and rolled out to the community. They will convince residents and groups that the Cairns Cultural Precinct is the answer to their future needs, dreams and desires.

What Is It and What's In It for Me?

- The Cairns Cultural Precinct is a Two-Stage project being developed by the Cairns Regional Council with financial support from the Queensland Government and the Federal Government.
- The Precinct will provide enormous economic stimulus for the Cairns region, including up to 1000 construction jobs over two years, long-term economic flow-ons and additional employment.
- The Precinct will allow locals to practise and perform in venues that have not previously existed in Cairns – venues with superb acoustics, full back of house facilities, new and flexible technology.
- It will allow more young people than ever to participate in or view artistic and cultural performances in their own community.
- The project is being managed by a Project Manager with more than 20 years experience in all levels of government and more than 10 years experience on major infrastructure projects.
- A Project Control Group (PCG) has been formed comprising Cairns Regional Council executives and attended by consultants as required.

- A Cultural Precinct Committee of the Council has also been formed – a formal standing committee of the Council that holds monthly meetings, open to the public, and whose agendas, reports and minutes are posted on the Council website.
- The precinct is proposed to include:
 - 1000 seat theatre with full fly tower, orchestra pit and the latest technology;
 - 400 seat studio theatre with flexible stage and seating arrangements;
 - Rehearsal studio, meeting and practice rooms;
 - Fully accessible front and back of house spaces;
 - Facilities for catering, bar and ticketing;
 - On-site car parking; and
 - A public plaza with alfresco dining and retail that complement the natural environment of Trinity Inlet and the mountains beyond the CCP.
 - A major regional museum with learning and research facilities focused on the Indigenous and multicultural heritage of the Far North. The museum will tell the stories of local Indigenous people; of successive immigrant communities into the region and their contribution; and the relationship between the people and environment of the Far North.

The Location:

- The Cairns Cultural Precinct is planned for an iconic site that sits close to the waterfront, adjacent to the CityPort cruise ship terminal.
- The State Government has gifted the site to the Cairns Regional Council for this purpose.
- This is the best location to meet all the requirements of the Cairns Cultural Precinct and its users.
- The site offers unparalleled opportunities to connect the waterfront, leisure and commercial uses of the CityPort precinct.
- Ports North is the consent authority for the site but is not required for Port operations now or in the future. In recent years, nearby Ports land similarly located back from the waterfront has been developed for commercial uses not related to Ports.
- Ports North has publicly stated the Cultural Precinct can be built on the site without impacting on current or future uses of the wharves or sea freight. The site is also compatible with both the CityPort and SeaPort masterplans.
- Stage 1 development will require Heritage approval for White's Shed. This project will ensure the retention and protection of Heritage-listed parts of White's Shed and machinery.
- The Cairns Cultural Precinct is being designed to meet all statutory requirements, Australian Standards and Government Policies.

The History:

- Since 1994, Cairns Regional Council has sought an appropriate site for the development of a new Performing Arts Centre for Cairns and the immediate region.

- Council's Corporate Plan 2009-14 states the need to, "establish a Regional Performing Arts Centre in a cultural precinct on the waterfront" and further there is a need to, "advocate for establishment of a regional museum".
- Council's Cultural Plan 2009-14 cites the need to, "plan and construct a Performing Arts Centre and support the State Government in establishing a regional museum".
- As far back as 40 years ago, formal discussions were held into the creation of a major museum in the Far North.
- Several major studies have been done in the last decade. All have supported the need for a place of significance where the stories of Indigenous heritage and the history of the Far North can be told.

Centre Design:

- 26 local architects from 18 firms attended a workshop to contribute their experience from an architectural perspective and to detail and identify the unique characteristics of the region.
- Using the results of that workshop, Expressions of Interest (EOI) in the design of the Cairns Cultural Precinct were called throughout Australia. This attracted interest from highly qualified international firms.
- EOI's were submitted by 30 firms from around Far North Queensland, Australia and the world.
- These were reduced to a short-list of 8 preferred architectural firms, based on capability to design the Precinct and experience.
- Each architectural team includes a local Cairns-based architect as project partner.
- The final short-list of four architects, invited to submit a tender, was decided after interviews and presentations held in Cairns on February 11.
- Formal tenders were reviewed based on the selection criteria. They were assessed by the interview panel which comprises the Government Architect, President of the Queensland Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects, CEO, Project Manager, theatre consultant, procurement and construction management consultant, and a cost planning consultant.
- The winning tenderer was selected in early April, 2011, and invited to submit 2 masterplan options and design concept options for the Cairns Cultural Precinct. The final concept designs were submitted on July 11.
- They were released for public comment during an exhaustive consultation process in June and July.
- All local residents and stakeholder groups will have the chance to comment on the designs and offer constructive feedback for consideration by the PCG, architect, sub-contractors and to be formally considered by the Council.
- No matter which firm is finally chosen to design the Cairns Cultural Precinct, the architecture will be innovative and will help to showcase the identity of the Tropical North.
- The precinct will be designed and built incorporating all principles of environmental sustainability.
- Design will take into account the potential for sea rise, climate change, turbulent events and storm surge.
- Venues, facilities and public spaces will be functionally excellent, demonstrating efficient, clever and practical design that clearly responds to the needs of the community.
- The Precinct will be designed to exceed requirements for access and to be a place of genuine welcome and inclusion for all. Accessibility and equity of access are a fundamental aim of the project,
- Buildings and spaces will reflect the richness and cultural diversity of the region.

- Traditional Owners, artists and others have and will continue to be consulted, to develop public and visual arts opportunities within the precinct.

Cost:

- The Precinct's preliminary budget was set at \$240 million. A cost planner highly skilled in performing arts facilities is currently reviewing preliminary cost estimates, and the budget will be continually revised as the project continues.
- Of that, \$40 million has been earmarked by Federal Government and up to \$80 million by the Queensland Government subject to the outcome of a business case. A preliminary \$2.5 million has been allocated by the State Government for that business planning.
- State and Federal funding has been allocated specifically for the Cairns Cultural Precinct and cannot be diverted to other uses. If not used for the Precinct, it will be lost to the region.
- The balance of funding will come from Cairns Regional Council but not through rates increases.
- CRC's contribution is proposed to be met from Property Reserve funds (about \$11 million); the sale of the Hartley Street site and Civic Theatre site (about \$16 million); plus loan borrowings (about \$33 million). This loan is usual practice for new public facilities – in much the same way as a home owner has a mortgage.
- Cost estimating and planning is focused on value - optimising the capital works budget rather than just minimising costs. The project team is aimed at achieving best value for Cairns.
- Council has already included the estimated project costs in its 10 year forecast.
- Cairns has the population to support the Cultural Precinct, particularly considering the regional population, adjoining local government areas, tourist numbers, and the forecast high number of visitors who may come to Cairns from cities such as Townsville and even Mackay to use the facilities. The International Airport also opens up the region to potential users from around the world.

Economic Benefits:

- The Cairns Cultural Precinct has been identified as the priority infrastructure project for the Cairns region, creating up to 1000 construction jobs over two years.
- Economic research shows that in 2008, the economic value of Far North Queensland's creative industries was higher than the fishing industry and approaching that of the sugar industry. About 6000 people were involved in some form of income-earning activity; there were about 3000 equivalent full-time employees; and a turnover of \$300 million. This will be further enhanced by the Cairns Cultural Precinct.
- The Precinct will support the Cairns Convention Centre by providing additional meeting and event space. This will help to alleviate the space pressure on the Convention Centre and will enable Cairns to retain as many conference and convention bookings as possible.
- There will be opportunities for the training and employment of Indigenous young people, through the design and construction stages.
- The Precinct will provide an enormous stimulus to the local economy hit hard by the GFC.
- When operational, flow-on benefits are forecast to include employment for more than 200 full-time equivalent employees.
- The Precinct will be a catalyst for growth in the southern end of the Cairns CBD.
- It will strengthen the adjoining government and commercial precincts, and link with tourism and retail precincts to the North and West.

- Forecasts indicate significant economic flow-ons in the form of high demand for goods and services supporting the Precinct, its users and visitors.
- The Precinct will help make Cairns' economy more diverse by catering to a wide range of users from local schools and dance schools to acclaimed national and international touring shows that could not otherwise visit our region.
- Historically, new cultural facilities around the world have generated economic growth by attracting complementary businesses and associated development.

Survey Results:

- Independent research was conducted late last year to gauge public opinion about aspects of the Cairns Cultural Precinct project.
- 86% of those surveyed believe the region and residents' children need and deserve a new arts and entertainment centre.
- Respondents understand the economic benefits to the city but not to them personally.
- About 43% of those surveyed knew nothing or very little about the Cairns Cultural Precinct but want to be better informed and consulted as the project continues.

Other Benefits:

- The Precinct will be a fantastic means to showcase the customs and styles of Indigenous artists of the Cape and Thursday Island, as never before showcased in this region. It will have the ability to broadcast and involve remote communities in the performance of their own culture.
- This will be a building of iconic status that will give Cairns a global context. Cairns is the gateway to Asia and Northern Australia, and this centre will be another feather in our cap as a significant city rather than merely a popular tourist location.
- The Cultural Precinct will provide another reason for domestic and international guests to stay longer, potentially increasing average visitor nights.
- By attracting more short and long stay visitors and increasing visitor nights, night time patronage of cafes and restaurants will be increased. The inner-city will naturally become a safer place.
- Cairns has much to offer business visitors but the Convention Centre does not have the facilities to cater for all. With fully accessible 400 and 1000 seat venues, rehearsal spaces, catering facilities and parking, the Precinct will offer a new and affordable opportunity for the business and events industry.
- About 900 new CBD car parking spaces will be created on-site or nearby.
- Planned public spaces and facilities in the Cairns Cultural Precinct will meet the needs of the Cairns community, its current and growing population, for the next 50 years.

Who Can Use It?

- Everyone. The centre is being specifically designed to be available to everyone who lives in or visits the Cairns region. Accessibility and equity of access are a fundamental aim of the project.
- The Precinct will allow local young people to practise and perform in venues that have not previously existed in Cairns – with superb acoustics, full back of house facilities, new and flexible technology.
- The Precinct will be used for a wide range of community events including artistic, sporting, popular music and dance, and will provide space for conventions in both the 1000 seat and 400 seat theatres.

- It will be open to school groups; youth groups; dance, music and drama schools; professional regional touring groups and individuals; sporting organisations; business and convention organisers.

Specific Communications Strategy

This communications strategy outlines the process for the next 12 months to engage with the wider community and stakeholder groups; to make residents and groups feel a part of the project and excited about the future Cairns Cultural Precinct. It is a working document that will be reactive to any issues or project milestones, and will be amended as required.

Separate specialist consultation will be undertaken on specific design features of the Precinct.

Immediate

Aim: To influence and excite people by explaining what the Cultural Precinct will mean to their life; outline what has happened so far; what is happening now; when they can comment and how they can familiarise themselves with the major features. Further, to outline key results of the research which showed people see a need for new facilities but want to know more about the project and want to feel more involved.

- To work with an approved advertising agency to develop creatives that will engage the “hearts and minds” of residents and stakeholders. Using these creatives, we need to close the gap identified in the research between the high number of people (94%) who recognise an urgent need for a new cultural facility and the low number who believe the Cultural Precinct will answer that need. Council needs to work with the advertising agency to develop a strong emotive theme and to develop a media buying plan that will ensure the message reaches a wide variety of audiences from all walks of life as diverse as “Mums and Dads”, young adults, tradespeople, baby boomers and aged residents.
- Council needs to work with their advertising agency on a full suite of creative applications – for business, schools and education facilities, the arts community, multicultural and indigenous groups and all other stakeholder sectors. These will be applied across a wide range of media applications – from website development to TVCs and radio, through to shopping centre displays and other engagement.
- Research results show the Precinct needs a non-political spokesperson experienced in the technical side of the project. Therefore advocates, ambassadors and spokespeople need to be identified and encouraged to address functions of major groups including Cairns Chamber of Commerce; Cairns Business Women’s; UDIA; Cairns Eisteddfod Committee; Port Douglas and Daintree Tourism.
- Media release to Cairns region newspapers, local TV and radio about the selection of four short-listed companies to submit tenders for the precinct design. This can also be made wider interest for state and national newspapers by adding more overall precinct information.
- Staffed public displays of the project to date at all major shopping centres – Cairns Central, Stockland, Smithfield and perhaps a location in Port Douglas. This can be complemented by a static display, with flyers and the display stands, to rotate around Council facilities including libraries and the Civic Centre.
- Update website for the Cairns Cultural Precinct outlining all information to date, new fact sheets, and contact form for people to comment and return via email. Should also be a page for project updates as they happen. Attach media releases to this website.
- E-blast and/or mailed flyer to Precinct database telling them what has happened so far and what’s next.
- Paid advertising in the Cairns Post, Cairns Sun and Port Douglas and Mossman Gazette giving a brief outline of the project to date; promoting upcoming public displays and dates; and directing people to the website or the 1300 number for more specific information.
- Dedicated 1300 line for people to call with comments or to have questions noted for answering.
- Radio and/or Cinema advertising that promotes the web address and 1300 number. Radio could also be used to advertise the locations and dates of the public displays.
- Project manager to speak with all local journalists about the project, their concerns and to offer an open book on anything that happens in the future in return for a fair go.

When the 2 final masterplans are available:

Aim: To generate excitement about the masterplans and the fantastic new facilities coming for the Cairns region, residents and visitors.

- Start with a major press opportunity unveiling the 2 designs, perhaps on the site, attended by the lead architect. Copies of the designs should be available for the media to run in the papers and on TV. Can we get a major entertainer to be there saying how fantastic it will be to entertain in such an amazing location? Need to create a real event for this one, to get people interested in the project and to make them feel a part of the decision-making process.
- Paid advertising in the Cairns Post, Cairns Sun, Port Douglas and Mossman Gazette next editions to showcase the new designs and invite comment. Direct people to the website and tell them about upcoming public displays in the shopping centres and Council facilities (*see below*).
- Follow-up PR - Stage some responses from influential people who can help to lead public debate in a positive light such as local supportive business leaders and anyone influential in the arts community.
- Create new staffed public displays ready to immediately roll out to the major shopping centres and then to popular major markets, school fetes, the Cairns Eisteddfod, Carnivale at Port Douglas, plus the Cairns Regional Show and other smaller local shows. Survey forms must be available.
- As above, new static displays with updated plans, the concepts and information to rotate around the Council libraries as well as the Civic Theatre. Leave survey forms for people to complete and drop in the box.
- Further releases to keep the information flowing about where the public displays will be staged, how residents can comment and so on.
- Survey forms offering people the chance to choose a preferred design and to offer their constructive criticism or comments.
- E-blast and/or mailed flyer to all on the Cultural Precinct database showing the two designs and inviting comment.
- Ongoing newspaper ads saying the 2 designs have been unveiled and inviting public comment. Ads to promote the means by which people can comment – website, public displays and 1300 number.
- Electronic advertising (radio, TV and Cinema) promoting the fact the 2 designs are in. Promote the web address for information and invite comment.
- 4 Page A4 newsletter mailout to all local residents and potential interest groups, either via letterbox drop or insertion in Cairns Post and Cairns Sun. This could contain a survey form for residents to choose their preferred design, comment, and return via Reply Paid Post.
- Focus group consultation with all major stakeholder groups and individuals to outline the preferred concepts and get their feedback and preferences.
- Invite all other smaller stakeholder groups (ie dance schools, schools etc) and individuals to attend public forums – suggest one day and one night time forum in Cairns, plus one in each major population centre (Port Douglas, Gordonvale etc) to show the preferred concepts and seek public comment.

When consultation is complete on the 2 final masterplans:

Aim – to tell people the consultation period has ended, the feedback is now being collated and discussed with the Project Team, that any necessary changes will be made to the preferred design, and a final concept will be announced soon.

- Media release – outlining the above messages, to all local media.
- Paid advertising in Cairns Post, Cairns Sun and Port Douglas Gazette simply saying “thanks for your interest and feedback ... it’s now being collated and an amended final concept will be unveiled soon”.
- Update on the website – add the media release and the project update.
- Continue the 1300 line if people need it.
- E-blast and/or mailout to all consultation participants and those on the database thanking them for their contribution, telling them what’s happening now and next.

When the preferred design has been amended and is final:

Aim – to showcase the final design, generate enthusiasm, and explain the next stage of the process.

- Big morning media launch to unveil the chosen concept; architect on hand to discuss the design and another spokesperson to explain what happens next in the development. Possible fly-through of the concept or powerpoint presentation showing the major features. Media release to be accompanied by a fact sheet of key points about the design (*see below*) as well as artwork.
- Separate media release and images to be sold into all major state and national newspapers and event industry magazines. Try for a larger feature in the magazines, telling the history, why this is needed and what it will mean for the state and national arts industry.
- Hold a separate public launch that afternoon – issue a written invitation to all consultation participants plus key stakeholders and interest groups to be on hand for the unveiling of the final concept. Make them feel a part of the design and again show that fly-through or powerpoint. Would be fantastic to have an entertainer to perform and set the scene ...
- New fact sheet about the design specifics – what it is and what it represents, key features of the design, other information from the architect as well as images.
- Update the website with the final concept and explanatory notes, plus media releases and fact sheet.
- Create/re-edit existing DVD and TVCs to incorporate final design and again create a “heart and mind” campaign about the new facility and how it will positively impact on the people of the region.
- Again identify chances for ambassadors or spokespeople to address major business organisations in and around Cairns. The message: “we’re now closer than ever to having our fantastic new Cultural Precinct”. Explain what’s happening and what’s next. Generate enthusiasm among the influential people.
- Paid advertising in the Cairns Post, Cairns Sun and Port Douglas Gazette either showing the final design (larger ads) or just directing people to the website and static displays (smaller, less expensive ads).
- New static information displays of the final concept and major features in Cairns Regional Council libraries, the Civic Centre, and possibly shopping centres if they allow static displays.
- A new 4 page A4 mailout to all ratepayers and stakeholder groups or insertion in the Cairns Post, Cairns Sun and Port Douglas Gazette outlining the final concept, its’ key features, key project features and future timeline of events. This is purely to inform.
- 1300 line to continue if needed.

Other Project Milestones before end 2011

Aim – to continue to openly communicate with the public about what’s happening, when and why.

- Media releases to Cairns region newspapers, local TV and radio whenever there are project milestones.
- Where a milestone can become interesting on a wider basis, submit releases or seek opportunities for a spokesperson to be interviewed with State and National newspapers or magazines.
- Updates via the website.
- E-blasts and/or mailouts to the stakeholder / consultation database.
- Continue to seek opportunities for a spokesperson to address business or interest groups.

Measuring the Outcomes

Results of this communications strategy will be measured on an ongoing basis via a number of means:

- Feedback forms on the Cultural Centre website. To be emailed back to the Project Team, these will link off every page of the website, allowing users to easily comment on plans to date and to register for project updates. When the 2 concepts are available, questions on the feedback form will be amended to seek feedback on the actual designs.
- The same feedback form will be added to the Cairns Regional Council website.
- A dedicated 1300 line for people to comment directly to the Project Team.
- Feedback or survey forms at all public displays, both manned and static.
- Demographic information on the above survey forms (to better understand who is being reached by the communications).
- Ongoing assessment of media coverage, both for and against the Cultural Precinct.

A follow-up independent survey could be undertaken to measure success more precisely but this is costly.

Assessing the responses and the number of responses via all of the above means will offer an overall view of whether the messages are getting out and whether residents do now understand “what’s in it for me”. The number of comments received on the 2 final design concepts will also provide a clear measure of whether the project is reaching the wider population, particularly if information on demographics is gathered.

The only drawback is that critics might be more likely to comment than people who are in favour of the Precinct. There might therefore be a significant number of people to whom the messages have reached but who do not feel the need to comment.

Issues management

Additional to the Communications Strategy is Issues Management: the Council should be prepared to identify and effectively respond to emerging issues surrounding the project. At this stage we can only identify the major issues likely to arise in the short-term, based on our information to date. Further issues and responses can be developed in a workshop with the Council if desired.

Current recognised issues are:

Site:

Considering recent weather events, people may be more concerned than ever about the chance of flooding and impact by storm surge or cyclone.

Response: Council must be prepared with full details about flood mitigation and anything being done to protect against storm surge and cyclone damage. Possibly also a reason why this site is being chosen, despite the extreme weather events in Queensland this year.

Cost:

This might be more relevant now considering the Council and State and Federal Governments must meet the costs of reconstruction and rebuilding from floods and cyclone damage. People may believe the money should be better spent on essentials rather than a “non-essential” project.

Response: Government funding has been allocated and remains in place for the Precinct. It cannot be diverted to any other project. The Cairns Cultural Precinct has been identified as the priority infrastructure project for the Cairns Region for years to come and is essential to create short and long-term employment as well as economic flow-ons. Economic research has shown the creative industries contribute more than \$300 million to the local economy – that is a major industry that will be further enhanced by the Cultural Precinct.

Potential non-local architect is chosen:

The issue of local versus non-local is ever-present, particularly when communities have been economically hard hit as Cairns has been in recent years. If a non-local architect is selected to design the precinct, there may be a strong view that the money should be spent locally.

Response: All architectural teams involved with the process have been partnered with a local Cairns region architect. As well, local architects were involved with workshopping key issues / features for the Precinct design and were invited to submit Expressions of Interest. Many did so. They were assessed, as were all Expressions of Interest, by an independent panel based on merit and their ability to meet the project criteria. This will be a world calibre building of iconic status that must be designed by the best possible architectural team, regardless of where they live. About 37 separate consultancies have been identified as required as part of the project planning and construction. Where possible, this work will be given to qualified local firms.

Perceived lack of consultation:

This has arisen from the research findings. It is possible that people who believe there has been insufficient consultation to date will say the project team is putting the cart before the horse by proceeding with design.

Response: Extensive consultation and communication has been done during the past 12 months. Independent research shows the vast majority of residents want new cultural and performing arts facilities but would like more information, so the Council is undertaking an extensive communication campaign now. Local residents and stakeholder groups will be given ample opportunity to comment during the next phase of the project of project design.

Spokesperson or Persons

There is a need to identify who should speak to the media or the public, and under what circumstances.