

**TITLE:** [PR-CM] Tweed Heads State Emergency Service (SES)

**SUBMITTED BY:** Building and Environmental Health



**Supporting Community Life**

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#### **SUMMARY OF REPORT:**

Investigations have been completed to address the requirements of the Crown Lands Division in seeking the long-term tenure for the State Emergency Service (SES) Tweed Heads Unit. This report provides the results of the investigation and community consultation process and provides recommendations for the future accommodation of the SES.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

##### **That Council:**

- 1. Advises the Crown Lands Division, Department of Primary Industries - Catchment and Lands that a diligent investigation of Council-owned land has revealed no suitable alternative sites exist for the accommodation of the State Emergency Service (SES) Tweed Heads Unit;**
- 2. Advises the Crown Lands Division, Department of Primary Industries - Catchment and Lands of the results of the public consultation process that revealed that the majority of the community sought no alternatives/offsets for the loss of land for public recreation and open space;**
- 3. Commits to conducting further consultation with the Banora Point community to investigate the improvement of local public recreation facilities at Darlington Green and Darlington Drive Parklands; and**
- 4. Requests the Crown Lands Division, Department of Primary Industries - Catchment and Lands to progress the previous request to obtain long term tenure of the State Emergency Service (SES) at Lot 682 DP 41192 Pioneer Parade, Banora Point and seeking in-principle support to extend the current facilities.**

**REPORT:**

Lot 682 DP 41192 Pioneer Parade, Banora Point, is crown land for the purpose of public recreation and under the management of the Banora Point (R89237) Reserve Trust as notified by Government Gazette on 12 July 1974. The affairs of the Trustee are managed by Tweed Shire Council. The use of the site is shared between the State Emergency Service (SES) Tweed Heads Unit and Tweed Unlimited Arts (TUA). Both the SES and TUA have occupied the site for over 30 years.

The SES Tweed Heads Unit and Richmond Tweed Regional SES have identified an operational need to expand the Unit's existing facilities incorporating a Shire-wide operations/control centre and storage facilities. Under the provisions of the *State Emergency Service Act 1989*, Section 17 requires a council of a local government area to provide (free of charge) suitable training facilities and storage and office accommodation for the SES.

At Council meeting of 15 June 2010, Council resolved to endorse the permanent location of the SES Tweed Heads Unit at Lot 682 DP 41192 Pioneer Parade, Banora Point and to request the (then) Land and Property Management Authority (LPMA) to create an additional purpose for Crown Reserve 89237 for emergency service facilities to ensure the long term tenure of the SES facility.

Following further discussions with LPMA, now Crown Lands Division, Department of Primary Industries - Catchment and Lands, Council resolved the following:

***"That Council:***

- 1. Seeks a short term licence over Reserve 89237 for the purpose of Site Investigation for a term of 12 months.***
- 2. Undertakes a diligent investigation to determine whether there are suitable sites on Council-owned land in the Shire that might be utilised for SES purposes.***
- 3. Pursues public consultation to show either:***
  - (i) That there is a surplus of open space in the Terranora locality and Reserve 89237 that is not required for public recreation; or***
  - (ii) That Reserve 89237 is required for public recreation but alternatives/offsets proposed by Council for the loss of public recreation space are acceptable to the community; or***
  - (iii) That no alternatives/offsets are sought by the community for the loss of land for public recreation and open space; or***
  - (iv) That the community will not accept alternatives/offsets offered by Council for the loss of open space and alternative sites for the SES facility will be pursued."***

See **Attachment 1** for a copy of the report.

The above items have now been addressed.

### **Item 1**

A licence has been entered into and shall expire on 31 May 2012.

### **Item 2**

A diligent investigation has been undertaken. Following discussions with the SES to identify the criteria for suitable site selection a search of Council-owned land within the Tweed Heads area was undertaken. The criteria for a site included a minimum allotment size of 5000m<sup>2</sup>, flood-free, compatible zoning and land use activities, and maximum flood-free access to flood affected areas of Tweed Heads and the surrounding areas. The investigation revealed one potentially suitable site. (See **Attachment 2**)

Lot 10 DP719752 is a 6158m<sup>2</sup> allotment of community land currently forming the southern triangular portion of Ducat Street Park adjoining the Pacific Highway corridor to the west. The adjoining parcel to the east, is zoned 2(a) Low Density Residential, and is in private ownership utilised for commercial activities, being the car wash facilities. It provides good access to the Shire's main network corridor via the Kennedy Drive on and off ramps. The site is zoned 6(a) Open Space and the Plan of Management for the site does not preclude the siting of emergency service facilities.

Flood modelling of the area revealed however that access to the site would be impacted therefore further discussions with the SES Tweed Local Controller were conducted. It was revealed that the Kennedy Drive underpass at the roundabouts was significantly flood impacted (2-3m) during the 2005 flood event therefore precluding the site from being deemed suitable.

### **Item 3**

To assist in fulfilling the requirements of Item 3 a month long community consultation process was developed and a community survey conducted to gather public opinion. The survey, information supporting the survey and the operations of the SES was disseminated through Council's website, at the Shire libraries of Murwillumbah, Tweed Heads and Kingscliff, at Council offices of Murwillumbah and Tweed Heads and through the Tweed LINK. A copy of the survey and supporting information is as attached (See **Attachment 3**).

An open day was conducted at the SES Tweed Heads Unit on Sunday 26 February 2012 between 10am and 2pm. Invitations to the Open Day were also specifically forwarded to surrounding residents and the Banora Point & Districts Residents Association. Shopping centre information stands were setup and supported by Council and SES staff, also on Sunday 26 February, at Banora Point Shopping Centre between 11:30am to 12:30pm and Flame Tree Park at 12:45pm to 1:30pm. Information stands were again setup on Wednesday 7 March 2012 at Tweed Mall between 10am and 12pm and Club Banora between 12:15pm and 1:30pm.

It was considered a further community meeting be held with residents potentially directly affected by the operations of the SES at the site. This was undertaken on Thursday 29 March 2012 commencing at 7pm and was attended by over 35 local residents representing over 17 of the 46 households invited.

## The Survey

174 were completed. The survey results are attached. (See **Attachment 4**) 79.9% of the responses resided permanently in the postcode of 2486, that being north to Cobaki, west to Carool, east to Banora Point and south to Terranora.

97.1% of the respondents felt they understood the role of the SES with 82.8% indicating they were aware the land the SES were currently located on was land set aside for public recreation. 69.2% supported the SES in staying at the current location forming the view that the site was convenient and central for the operations of the SES, flood-free with good access to major road networks. 29.1% did not support the SES remaining on the site most of the opinion the site was too small, an unsuitable use for a residential area, held concerns for vehicular congestion along Pioneer Parade, and that the site should remain as a site for public recreation.

When asked if the site should be enhanced to provide public recreational facilities, should the SES be allowed to remain, 61.5% believed it was not necessary with 24.7% supporting the idea, 13.8% remained unsure. However 42.5% believed it necessary for other similar sites to be provided with better facilities, 36.2% did not and 21.3% remaining unsure.

51.7% of the responses believed Banora Point public open spaces were adequate for recreational purposes, 31.6% did not, with 16.7% unsure.

The survey also had provision for further comment from respondents. Comments received included:

- Recommending alternative site locations and amalgamation of emergency service organisations
- Objecting to any tree removal on the site
- Inadequate street parking during SES response operations to an emergency event
- Speeding vehicles and community safety
- Inadequate information provided with the survey
- Site considered too small and has no room for future expansion
- Traffic congestion is also an issue caused by the activities of the Tweed Unlimited Arts on open days and weekends.
- Provide a second access point

## The Community Meeting

Those residents that were identified as being potentially directly impacted on by the operations of the SES on the site were invited to the community meeting. More than 35 residents attended the meeting, representing 17 of the 46 households identified.

The majority of the attendees held concerns for the operations of the SES on-site and reflected the concerns raised through the survey.

- Operations unsuitable for a residential area
- Access & traffic congestion along Pioneer Parade during emergency events
- Loss of local open space with no other available open space within the vicinity

- Loss of on-site vegetation due to any further expansion
- Security and traffic safety

Some residents indicated support for the on-going operations of the SES stating they tolerated the short-term inconvenience because of the valuable work the SES were doing for the community.

### **Other Responses**

Council has received a petition signed by occupants of 10 of the local residences, 8 of which were represented at the Community Meeting. The petition did not support the presence of the SES at the site raising concerns for loss of local open space and traffic congestion.

The Banora Point & Districts Residents Association Inc. has also submitted an unsigned letter from the Secretary advising of the concerns expressed by their members due to the unsuitability of the site for SES operations within a residential area and traffic congestion along Pioneer Parade during emergency events thereby urging the Council to find a more suitable location elsewhere. The Association also raised concerns for the community consultation process by way of the questionnaire stating that they felt the questions "are very subjective and the public could be misled by their meaning".

The Tweed Unlimited Arts have however supported the continuing occupation of the SES on the site. The Arts community have highlighted their good working relationship with the Tweed Heads SES Unit and the co-operative relationship they have during emergency events. During such an event the Arts group offer their facilities for SES use. They have expressed their belief that the presence of the SES also provides security for the site and its facilities.

### **Potential Actions and Site Design Considerations**

Prior to the community consultation process neither Council staff nor the SES members of the Tweed Heads Unit were aware of the strong concerns raised by the local community, Council not having held any records reflecting the matters raised. However the SES has been working to alleviate concerns raised regarding its operations.

1. Street congestion during an emergency event can be alleviated with the relocation of "out-of-area" assistance during significant events, such as the Australia Day Flood event, to a pre-arranged marshalling area that would accommodate larger vehicles and additional personal. The SES has already commenced negotiations with a number of potential land owners.
2. Street congestion and noise impacts from sand-bagging operations will also be undertaken off-site with the implementation of mobile temporary operations in strategic locations where residents in need of sand bags can obtain sand bags locally to protect their properties.
3. On-site design consideration with the extension of the existing facilities to incorporate the provision of more on-site parking for both the SES and TUA and improving current parking areas.

4. Traffic along Pioneer Parade will also be decreased with the reintroduction of a second access to the site off Kiora Street.

### **Local Open Space**

Lochlomond Drive Drainage Reserve is a Tweed Shire Council Park located 280m to the west of the subject site. Public infrastructure at the site lists park seating. From the subject site the Park is accessible via Kiora Street and Birnam Avenue. (See **Attachment 5**)

Banora Green Darlington Drive and adjoining Darlington Drive Parks are directly north of Lochlomond Drive Drainage Reserve across from Darlington Drive. Public infrastructure at the site lists public toilets/showers, football posts and basketball hoops, park seating and bubblers. (See **Attachment 5**)

The Parks incorporate wetland areas and bird habitat, rainforest pockets, large flat playing areas and easy access.

Potential for any further enhancement of the site would need to be investigated.

### **Alternatives**

Only one alternative exist to the current proposal to seek long term tenure for the SES. This would be to further investigate the purchase of a new site.

As a guide preliminary enquiries with the Lismore City Council revealed that construction costs for a similar facility recently completed for the SES with a comparable membership would cost approximately \$1.7 in 2012. The cost of purchase of land would be in addition to this figure and would need to meet the criteria set by the SES.

### **Conclusion**

In developing the strategic direction for the Tweed Shire SES facilities extensive consultation was undertaken with the local and regional units of the SES. The SES strongly supports the current location for the Tweed Heads Unit.

Following consultation with the Tweed Shire community and more specifically the local community surrounding the current facilities it is evident whilst the majority of the community supports the current location there remains some strong opposition locally.

It is considered that improved on-site car-parking and provision of a second vehicular access to the site will alleviate traffic congestion and safety issues along Pioneer Parade, in addition to the SES's intention to better manage emergency events to ensure response operations are located off-site.

Further consideration can also be given at the design stage, for any future development, to ensure the site does not provide local traffic the ability for vehicular access through the site.

In addition the majority of the community considered that public recreation alternatives exist within the local area and therefore no alternative/offsets have been sought however

a significantly minority have indicated the need for better facilities. Therefore further consultation with the community could be undertaken to further explore their needs.

### **OPTIONS:**

1. Advise the Crown Lands Division that Council has completed the requested investigations and community consultation and Council now seeks to progress the previous request to obtain long term tenure of the SES at its current location seeking in-principle support to the request to also extend the current facilities.
2. Seek an interim licence for the SES Tweed Heads Unit to occupy the land whilst Council investigates and relocates the SES Tweed Heads Unit.

### **CONCLUSION:**

A thorough investigation of the issues raised by Crown Lands Division has been undertaken. Full community support for the existing arrangements has not been forthcoming. However it is considered with the SES addressing operational needs for significant events in view of local community concerns and the addition of further design modifications to be incorporated into any further development proposal for the site many of the issues raised can be alleviated.

Currently only \$70 000 is allocated to the future development of the site.

In view of the financial implications and the ability to alleviate local concerns the preferred option is Option 1.

### **COUNCIL IMPLICATIONS:**

#### **a. Policy:**

Corporate Policy Not Applicable.  
State Emergency Services Act 1989.

#### **b. Budget/Long Term Financial Plan:**

Option 1 - \$0.5M.  
Option 2 - \$1.1M - \$2.5M.

#### **c. Legal:**

Not Applicable.

#### **d. Communication/Engagement:**

Not Applicable.

### **LINKAGE TO INTEGRATED PLANNING AND REPORTING FRAMEWORK:**

- 2 Supporting Community Life
- 2.1 Foster strong, cohesive, cooperative, healthy and safe communities
- 2.1.4 Provide education and advocacy to promote and support the efforts of the police, emergency services and community groups to improve the safety of neighbourhoods and roads

**UNDER SEPARATE COVER/FURTHER INFORMATION:**

1. Council Report of 17 May 2011(ECM 48481035).
  2. Aerial Photograph (ECM 48481051).
  3. Survey and Supporting Information (ECM 48481052).
  4. Survey Results (ECM 48481053).
  5. Local Community Land Photographs (ECM 48481054).
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