

Waaanta

NEWSLETTER JUNE 2009

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LRASC branches out to Cairns office

Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council opened its new office in Cairns at the end of March, following what was hailed at one of the biggest – and best – decisions any Lockhart River Council has ever made.

The connection to Cairns has made a number of Council functions a lot cheaper and more efficient, and therefore beneficial to the community, says Mayor Rodney Accoom (pictured).

He said it also afforded young people from Lockhart the opportunity to experience city-life. "When we first met as a new Council I was thinking about changes to Lockhart and how I was going to get young girls and boys from Lockhart to Cairns so they get to experience city life," he said. "The Council came up with the very good idea of starting an office down there in Cairns which would be a branch of the Council offices here. "So we asked our acting-CEO at the time, Stanley Mugwiria, to go find out if there was a way we could do this, and he did."

Mr Accoom said the office was next to



Kowanyama Aboriginal Shire Council's office on Anderson Street. "Kowanyama have had their office for 9-10 years and it's worked for them, and other communities have done the same thing," he said.

"So I think it's a good idea and it's working very well."

Council CEO Peter Opio said it was an opportunity for the Council to modernise and update its accounting systems.

"There was a set of problems there with the purchasing so I'm hoping that all these teething problems will be overcome and we shall be able to have our system back so we can respond at a good speed to the requirements of good corporate governance as a result of the move," he said.

"We're expecting the new office relocation will mean more efficiency, more effectiveness and we should be able to meet our requirements well on time." Director of Corporate Services Stanley Mugwiria said one of the best things about the move was the availability of training for staff members.

Continued p 2 ...



Strong Community Life! Leah Warradoo & Claudia Hudson 'hang out' with former-Olympian Nova Peris and former-league star David Peachey Full story p 9



Doors open in Cairns



(Continued from p 1...)

"When I got here in July last year I realised we had very serious problems with staffing in that we don't get staff as we need them, and we didn't get staff with good skills, especially in accounting," he said.

"So staff recruitment was difficult until we realised we had an option here of relocating our office to Cairns where we can address those problems, and there were also the benefits in terms developing the skills of Lockhart River people.

"The other thing we wanted to achieve in Cairns was managing our purchasing. "From up in Lockhart we didn't know who we were dealing with, we didn't know the suppliers, but here now we just book and appointment with them or ask them to come over.

"We have also developed some good business relationships with the government agencies where there are issues coming up all the time with acquittals and things.

"So we have created a presence everywhere, there were teething problems for the first month or two but now we are doing our work almost as it comes in.

"It has been very good, the problems were small but our team is very strong and we have worked through it."



A word from the CEO, Peter Opio

Welcome to the latest edition of *Waanta*, the Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council's newsletter.

There are many things we as a Council need to do to comply with requirements under the Local Government Act.

One of them is to make sure that by the end of this financial year we have the operational plan ready for the year 2009/2010.

Another is to make sure that we have the budget prepared and adopted by the Council before the 30th August 2009.

You can read about how these things are in the process of being achieved in our Corporate Services' reports on pages 12-14.

We also need to make sure an annual report is prepared and submitted to the minister before November of this year, which I want to assure residents I will be taking care of.

This newsletter, along with the annual report, is all part of making sure we have processes that constantly inform members of the community about the activities and the performance of the council.

We will be publishing regular council newsletters that will be given to each of the households in Lockhart to help in keeping them fully informed of what the Council is doing.

As well, to make sure we keep pace with technology, we've actively embarked on a process of building a Council website.

Work has commenced and we are hoping by the time you read this the site will be up and running.

The website will provide very valuable information to all our customers, both inside and outside in relation to what they need to know about Lockhart.

There will be constant updates and I think the webpage - along with this newsletter - will be a new way of trying to connect with the rest of the world in terms of what we're doing.



Pictured on this page: the front doors of the new Cairns office; the opening celebration in Cairns in March; and, Local MP Jason O'Brien with LRASC CEO Peter Opio

State government to raise rents from July 1

Rents across all state housing in Queensland are set to rise to 25% of combined household incomes as of 1 July this year.

The Department of Communities (Housing and Homelessness Services) told *Waanta* that the introduction of the community housing rent policy was about bringing social housing in Indigenous communities into line with all other social housing in Queensland.

"It will lead to a fair, affordable housing system for all tenants and housing providers right across the state," the Department said.

"It will benefit communities because councils will have more money to fix up housing because they'll be getting more income.

"What this will do is give people living in Indigenous communities access to the same standard of social housing as other Queensland communities.

"This is about providing homes for people who need them most, regardless of whether they live in Longreach or Lockhart River."

Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council has written a letter to the Minister in connection with the new policy because of concerns about the rent hike.

Mayor Rodney Accoom said the Council was trying to negotiate with the Government.

"I think it's going to be really hard on our people because people in Lockhart don't get a very big income," he said.

"It's a bit of a problem that the housing mob are putting on us.

"When I've asked the bloke who comes up here from the Housing Department some questions, he said he couldn't answer them, he said he was just the messenger.

"But I heard from someone that it's because down in the cities there are rich people getting housing department homes and they're getting cheap rents.

"So what they're doing is bringing all those problems from the cities into communities."

Mr Accoom said he was also aware there was still overcrowding in the community.

"We're still looking for more funding to get houses into the community so we're not so crowded," he said.

"If we get it, it's not the Council who is going to come up with the design, we'll get the community involved, to make the community proud.

"There's a lot of people talking about having a

good view, so we want to start from the beach up, not the community down.

"That's what I want to say to my people in this community.

"Council is the one who lives in the community and we see what the needs are, not from down in Cairns, and if Council builds houses here, Council should be the one who decides what."

MEANWHILE, almost every tenant in Lockhart River is up to date with their rent which is "all good" says LRASC Housing Office Cassie Accoom.

She also said she hoped people would 'pitch in' after changes to the way rent is calculated come into play on 1 July.

"It's not us putting the rent up, it's not the Council, it's the government," she said.

"Now that the rent's rising it's a matter of getting everyone in the house to pitch in, especially because the majority of people around town are on CDEP and that's not much.

"My job is to make sure that people are up to date with their rents and at the moment the community is all good.

"People can also come into see me when they need repairs or maintenance around the house."

But Cassie said it was not her responsibility to make the phone call for them even though she understood there were privacy issues around the public phone at the Council.

"With the maintenance, it's everyone's responsibility to actually phone the call centre themselves," she said.



Left: LRASC Housing Officer Cassie Accoom says everyone needs to pitch in to help with the State Government's new system for assessing household rents.





Council says it 'won't give up hope' on alcohol issues

"We're still fighting," is the message Council wants to pass on to residents who would like to see the Lockhart River canteen back up and running.

Mayor Rodney Accoom also said he believed the government was "playing games" with the Councils on the issue.

"I'd like to tell my people that Council is not giving up hope yet, we're still fighting to see if we can get our canteen back," he said.

"That will mean people can get their beer instead of driving out to Archer or Coen and coming back and getting booked by the police."

He said a number of people had attempted to gain the license back for the community.

"The previous manager applied for it and they knocked him back, we had one of pay clerks apply for it and they knocked her back," he said.

"We feel that either the Government or the Liquor Licensing are playing games with the Council. "Jason O'Brien came up here just before the election to tell us he had a support letter for the canteen if we got it renovated.

"There's a few spots there

which need to be done up, but it's not that bad – I don't know who's playing games with us."

He said some of the other communities were having the same difficulties. As soon as the canteen closed, people here were just going into the drugs and making their own brew," he said. "They make it in the morning and in the afternoon they drink it, and that's killing them.

"We want the community to know we're still there fighting for them, we won't give up hope."

Government says CDEP changes should work towards more jobs & training

Changes to CDEP after 1 July should mean more full-time jobs and more money for training, says CDEP Program Manager Rod Cordell.

He also said for those remaining on CDEP, as some will, the program would no longer be seen as a job in itself.

And while there won't be any top-up, Mr Cordell said he is hopeful that will be balanced by the opportunity to earn from tourism and business activities.

"After July 1 CDEP will become basically a training and employment program which is going to be split into two streams," he said.

"A Work Readiness Stream will have the majority of participants involved in a personal program of vocational training and work experience, and will be organised around projects that will benefit the community where possible.

"Between 30-40 percent of participants will be going on to what is going to be called Community Development Projects, which is a continuation of the current CDEP.

"We've been assured by the Commonwealth government that some positions currently being filled by CDEP, such as in HACC, Women's Shelter, Library, Childcare, School and Police, will be converted into real jobs in order for that work to continue.

"We don't know yet whether all those CDEP positions will be converted into real jobs, nor whether people who are currently doing those jobs



will get them, or others will be invited to apply." He also said there would be the opportunity for tourism and business activities within the new CDEP.

"There will definitely be more full time jobs, there will be more money for training," he said.

"There will be no opportunity for top up from CDEP but I hope that will be balanced by our business activities and tourism activities and whatever else we do to generate income. ->



Pictured top is CDEP supervisor Linda Accoom with Daphne Clermont & Patricia Hobson. Above is Morgan Hobson, Danny Butcher & Andrew Butcher



Councillors Piva, Accoom & Hudson say...



Cr Paul Piva

My main interest is pretty much trying to get some of the locals into Indigenous business. Our business has had a flow on-effect - we started up with one car last year now we've got eight vehicles and we're learning a lot of things. Employment, education and housing are also some of the many issues we have here in Lockhart.



Cr Daniel Accoom

At the moment the Council is doing a lot of good things, it's pretty hard to say just one thing. Overall it's good, I'm brand new at it, but I want to learn a lot more, every chance I get. I also just got back from a Cape York Sustainable Futures meeting and I'm going to keep working on that, definitely.



Cr Danielle Hudson

I just want to encourage young people to get more involved, to give more input in what goes on in the community, so we can build a better place for all of us. We've got a few things happening at the moment, and other things we're trying to do. People are welcome to come and see us and get involved with anything that's happening.



→ "Participants will benefit directly from the income earned by those ventures, for example the take away food van and the tour guiding. "Participants involved in CDEP business activities will be paid from the profits of these activities for the extra hours they work, so there will be a new opportunities to look for part time work on top of their CDEP." He said the government has made it very clear that CDEP is no longer to be seen by remote communities as a place for long term part-time employment.

"Participation in CDEP is no longer seen as a job in itself but as a program that prepares people by giving them training and work experience, to get real jobs," he said.

"This is not my personal opinion it is the new policy of the Commonwealth Government." He said after July 1 CDEP hopes to work with renewed cooperation with the Council and has invited the Council to propose projects where the two organisations can work together for the good of the community.





Community Development Team

The difference between having an idea and making it happen in Lockhart River may only be as far as the Community Development Team away.

Directed by former Councillor Dorothy (Dottie) Hobson, currently being assisted and mentored by Tara Zaicz, the CDT supports HACC, Justice Group, Womens' Shelter, Land & Sea, Youth, Puuya Centre, playgroup and the library. Dottie says her experience as a Councillor has served her well in her position which sees her reporting on no less than 15 grants every quarter. But, she said, it's worth it.

"I would say we are driving it down here in Lockhart to support and do something for our community," she said.

"Being in the council has given me a lot of knowledge about how Council can work and things to do for the community.

"We have a lot of submissions to write and report on but the people who give you funding and grants want to know what you've done with their money, so that's a big thing."

Over the past few months some of the big things have included the recording of a CD by local bands and a visit to the community by David Peachey and Nova Peris, as part of the Strong Community Life project.

Big things coming up include organising the dance teams to Laura and NAIDOC.

"A couple of months ago we had a community concert with all the youth, especially the boys doing their songs," Dottie said.

"We had someone here for a week working with them to get their songs right and the night we did a concert was a big success.

"A lot of people turned up and it made us proud.

"They used to do love songs but now they been doing cultural songs, talking about their country.

"Everybody is proud of our boys in this community, they are doing good things.

"Then the Laura Festival is in June and after we recover from that we've got to get organised for NAIDOC.

"Last time we didn't get down to Laura because it was too wet, the kids were all ready to go but the range was too slippery.

"This time we have a 'plan b', which is to fly out if we have to!"

The CDT was developed six years ago.

"The CDT is about doing things for our community like programs and activities, and from there we've just been doing good things" she said.



"The message we would try to get out is we want to get more parents involved in our activities.

"We always say to parents please come along & it's important that they come with their children cause some of them are very strong, so we would say come along and get involved.

"Every time we put something on the parents should come because it's better for them too.

"We do disco night, movie night, and every afternoon they go swimming or do sports."

Dottie said having Tara on board as a mentor was very good.

"I did my Diploma in Community Development in Townsville and I've been in community development since it started, but some of the things I find it hard.

"It's good to have a mentor working alongside, it's very good."

Tara, who is working as Assistant Director of the CDT, originally worked as the first Youth Coordinator on Lockhart.

"Once that was up and running we handed that position over to a local person, who I'm mentoring now as well, and I've gone on to work with Dottie as the Director," she said.

Tara said she had seen good changes over the three years she has been here.

"Mainly in the capacity of the local people, having a local director now, local youth worker, all local staff & co-ordinators in the services so between the people that co-ordinate the services here and Dottie, things are going really well."

Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council Mayor Rodney Accoom said the CDT was doing a great job.

"It's good that the CDT is here, they know what they're doing and hopefully our young ones will take it on one day," he said.



HACC team cooking along

It's been quite some time in the making, but HACC (Home & Community Care) finally has that new kitchen they're been waiting on.

Lockhart River Mayor Rodney Accoom said he was pleased the project was finally up and running.

"All that time they've waited, at last we've got it there," he said. Coordinator Veronica Piva, pictured here at a Health Action Team meeting in Cairns last month, said they had waited a long time and would hopefully

be 'back to normal' soon.

"The priority was a stainless steel kitchen so it would be up to standard," she said.

"We'll be back to providing meals now."

Interim coordinator while Veronica was away, Ivy Hobson, said they still managed to take the elders out for the day to bbq or whatever they wanted to do.

"The bingo will be up and running again when the Centre is finished as well," she said.

Lockhart River Council



Engineering Services Director Dave Armour said the work at the HACC building was extensive.

"The HACC centre was actually funded in 2003 and never eventuated," he said.

"So we sorted out a new kitchen and driveway, two carparks, a fence, and also we're putting up a sail cloth at the back of the centre, so they can actually sit outside and have outdoor functions," he said.

Mr Accoom said he'd like to see if Council can get some funding to refurbish or replace the rest of the building.



HACC workers Ina Warradoo, Ivy Hobson & Lorraine Rokeby

Just keep out of trouble!

"Keep out of trouble" is the message Wulpumu Community Justice Group wants to pass onto the Lockhart River community.

Coordinator Willy Clark (*pictured right*), says his job involves things like court issues, child safety and bail conditions – all things he'd rather not be too busy doing.

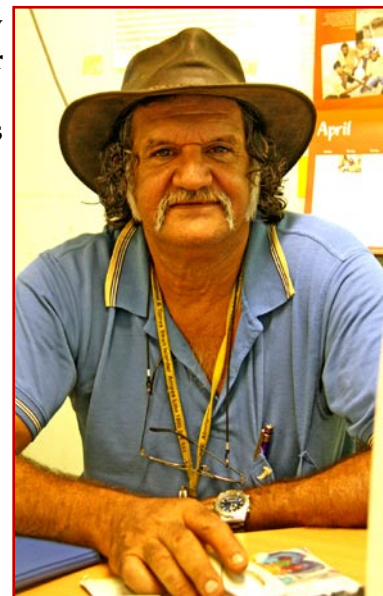
"Be aware of yourself, if you've got any problems come and see me straight away, I'm here 24 hours," he said.

"Make sure you obey the rules and keep out of trouble."

He said the CJG currently had 15-16 members representing all clan groups.

"We also have three Justices of the Peace, with another one just waiting on their paperwork to come through," he said.

"We handle minor issues such as public nuisance and bringing alcohol into a restricted area, some cases we can't handle we just pass it back to the magistrates court and they'll deal with it."





Womens' Shelter worker Lorraine Clermont wants the community to know that they are there to help everyone.

Lorraine said it was about helping families. "We're here to help, they know that," she said.

"We are always here, it doesn't matter if it's during the night, the police come knock or give us a call.

"We all support each other working here and we're grateful for that."

Land & Sea trying to weed out feral pests

Weed control, feral animals and culture are all on the current agenda of the Kawadji-Kanidji, Indigenous Natural Resource Land & Sea Management Centre coordinator Blade Omeenyo (pictured) says.

"We've been doing weed control, especially pond apple and sicklepod around the Mungkuma Land Trust area," he said. "We would like people to be educated what these weeds like and what they can be doing in their yard because they killing all the other plants to get rid of them. "We've got fact sheets and everything about it in the office here."

He said they were also trying to control some of the animals around the community as well. "We are also trying to get the feral pigs, horses and cattle but we haven't got a license to shoot pigs, we have to do it with local hunters," he said.

"And we're trying to get elders to come down to the Land & Sea Centre, or we go up to them, to educate us and the rest of the community about passing down culture. "I'll be trying to set up a data system at the Centre and recording all that information so that we can create a community for future generations for the record.

"So I just want to pass on the message to feel free to come to Land and Sea Centre, have a coffee and chat about culture or history or anything you want." Lockhart Mayor Rodney Accoom said the Centre was doing a good job but needed more clan groups involved, especially in the culture project. "The coordinator is doing his

best to let the people know they need people from the other clan groups to be involved," he said. "They're doing a good job."



Something for everyone in Strong Community Life

The highlight of community life for many in April was a visit by footy legend David Peachey and Olympic medalist Nova Peris.

The visit was coordinated and supported by the Council's Community Development Team. CDT director Dorothy Hobson said it was a big thing.

"They were working across the board with us running activities for everybody in the community over the four days they were here," she said.

"They met with Council when they got here and covered every group they could.

"People like David Peachey, you only see on tv, but now they've been here in person so it gave the girls and boys especially something to look forward to, you know, when you can go out and meet people like that in person and throw a ball around with them."

Lockhart River Mayor Rodney Accoom said the CDT had done well to organise the visit.

"Dottie and Tara are working hard to get things, like having David and Nova in Lockhart," he said.

David Peachey, whose mob is Wiradjuri on his Mum's side and Paakantji on his Dad's (both western NSW), said he had been working with the Strong Community Life program for just over a year.

"I think the good thing about Strong Community Life is it's not 'fly-in/fly-out', it's three to six days, so even though that's a short amount of time, you get to know people and interact with the kids," he said.

"The parents all know you're in town as well, it's not only about the kids, although the profile that comes along with me means the kids in particular get to touch and feel and say 'yes, you are real, we've seen you on tv' and that's exciting as well.



Musicians (from Troy Cassar-Daley's band!) working with year 7 students at the Puunya Centre

"You don't have to be a David Peachey or a Nova Peris but if you're successful within your own rights in your community you can say you are a success." Both said it was the first time they had been to Lockhart River.

Nova, whose mob is Muran, in western Arnhem Land (NT) said she had loved it.

"The good thing is we're not just coming in working with children, it's right across the board from the old people to the middle aged people to the teenagers and to the kids, it's a whole all around look at community life perspective.

"My belief is you can't go wrong working with the old people because they're always sharing stories and really urging how important it is that kids are the future and education and health is everything. "So it's a whole concept of not just healthy living but right from education and culture, right from the grassroots."

Culture camps helping to keep youth in touch

Touch footy and a cultural camp in July are two things youth can sign up for now, if they're keen.

Youth Coordinator Krystal Megan Dean (pictured) said she wants to see more happening and anyone was welcome to come and talk to her about it.

"I want to see more activities happening and probably more training, like First Aid, to try and get them going so they can get some work," she said.

"We've already had some music workshops and we're trying to get a boys and girls touch footy team up so we could have a game every Saturday night or something.

"Anyone who's interested can come and talk to me and we'll get something sorted out for them.

"I also want everyone to know we're having a cultural camp in the next school holidays, it's

for boys and girls and we're going to have some old ladies come too, to talk about bush tucker and language.

"I'm doing a course with the Cape York Institute, so we've got the money for that from them.

"If they're interested in joining the touch teams they can come and see me, and then I'll put some notices out for when we train and play.

"If they want to come to the camp, they should come and see me so I know, probably two or three weeks before."





Engineering Services

Engineering Services director Dave Armour (*pictured*) has only been in Lockhart since late last year but with the long-awaited HACC refurbishment already under his belt, work is ready to keep moving on. He said Engineering Services entails everything to do with engineering, from water through to the road gang, along with the community plumber, electrician and carpenter gang...



LAND FILL

Projects-wise we've got the old dump to close off, which is the land fill project, he said. At the moment we're still waiting on government to see if we have got the contract to do that. We've got to bring quite a bit of material in, we've got to level it all off and there's something like 40,000 cubic metres of back fill or soil, to level the whole place – that's about 700 truckloads. I've got two trucks here and I have to hire another three, so it's not going to be an overnight job, it's going to take months to do. And then what we do is, we plant seeds, grass and regenerate it back into natural surroundings. The new dump is going up towards Taylor's Landing, there's a new road that's been done. A temporary dump will be sign-posted when we close the old dump and until the new dump is ready.

WATER RETICULATION

Again, we're waiting on the government to see if we've got the contract or not. As soon as the wet season is finished we need to be onto it, these things tend to take time. In the past the water pressure has been dropping because of the old pumps and you get a build up of calcium because the pressure drops and the calcium starts to build up in the pipes. We've not really had a system to clean that, and it should have been cleaned regularly, but with the new system we're putting in the pumps will be able to handle that sort of thing. The whole town is being re-piped, it has to be done this year, it's a must before the wet season, the sewage upgrades for a few places around town is the same.

CARPENTERS & ELECTRICIANS

Lenny is the new carpenter and we've taken his brother on as an apprentice. Lenny has actually run two businesses and I felt quite confident we were taking on the right person. He's set his goals and he's starting to get things moving – it's been a long time since that has happened in the community, we've had backlogs of work through Q-Build and the Department of Housing but I think that will start coming up to date. We're looking at putting stainless steel kitchens in all the houses now, it's more durable and maintenance-wise it's a lot less, so that will save us in the long run. We've also never actually had an electrician before, they were just contractors who charge something like \$260 an hour not including flights and they used to charter flights, so that was very expensive for us. **(Continued next page...)**



Pictured Left: The HACC kitchen gang: Lynton Gaulton, Lenny Gaulton, Gary Warradoo, Bob Greenfield & Lloyd Singleton.



Call goes out for workshop apprentices

Workshop Supervisor and Leading Hand Lance White said he was confident the workshop, now run by Council, would soon be on top of its workload, especially if they could encourage more apprentices to come on board.

Mr White said they already had apprentice diesel fitters and a trainee tyre fitter hard at work, but needed more. "We do general servicing for the council vehicles, maintenance schedules and day to day maintenance on council roadwork machinery,"

he said. "The workshop was privately owned before and we're only just starting up now as a council operation. "So we've got to start from scratch which is very hard, but we're confident we'll get on top of it.

"We're looking for more apprentices, motor mechanic mainly. "It'll be awhile, I'd say, probably after the end of the financial year. "But if they're going to do an apprenticeship they've got to be serious about it."



Above: Lance White, Michael Macumboy, Road Gang Supervisor Coco Namoa & Solly Hudson

(...from previous page)

We decided to see how we went having an electrician up here permanently, we weren't too sure how we would go because electricians are pretty hard to source. But with the downturn in the economy at the moment, there's a lot of people being put off, so we were able to find one. We've got two carpentry apprentices now and we'll be looking for an electrical apprentice. Unfortunately electrical is one of the hardest apprenticeships to get, the block courses are very hard, it's all maths, algebra and things like that. So we need someone who's really keen on it, dedicated and also pretty good at maths. I don't want to put too much pressure on these young blokes, because what happens is they think they can do it and then they've got all this pressure on from the courses, it stresses them out and they tend to walk away from it. But we try to organise mentors for them when they get down to Cairns, to help them out.

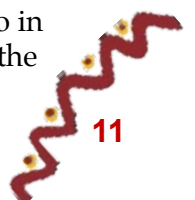
RETAIL STORE

The new shopping centre is a government project but it's created jobs for us and the contractor has rented a considerable amount of machinery from us so the Council has benefited from that, which has been quite good. Plus that then has created work for local people also, from CDEP. It's not going to be finished until well after August, it's been extended because of the wet season, and they're also looking at a new service station, because that wasn't really thought of. We've had the two pumps but I think they're actually

going to build a new service station at the store. When the retail store is finished the old store will move into the new store, they'll then demolish the old store and that's where a new multipurpose centre will be built. My understanding of the of multipurpose centre is that it will be offices, whether that's to cater for government people coming in here or to create new jobs, for the likes of business mentor or carers and there's someone else coming in from Queensland Health as well, we haven't been able to have these services before because there's been nowhere to put them or house them. It will be a great help to the community because at times we couldn't get anybody up here, people would have to wait a month or more so everything had to be put on hold.

SERVICE

So that's been great and we've actually got a great team here now. We're creating a service and we hope to service all of the community including the police, health and education. That's generating a big income because we also do jobs for the Department of Housing and Q-Build, we do repairs. So we've got electrical, carpentry and plumbing. It's creating work for the community, it's also creating apprenticeships. We try our best and it's about giving them a career and something to look forward to in life, so they're not just hanging around the community. They can go anywhere they want when they've got that trade under their belt.





Corporate Services

Training focus for Councillors & employees

Council has undertaken a number of new internal initiatives to assist us with carrying out the best possible standard of service for our residents, staff and community, says CEO Peter Opio (*pictured right*).

For the first time Human Resources or staff recruitment processes will be standardised, which will mean everyone is under similar contract when they are hired and a standard 'Council Employee Handbook' will be given to all employees, he said. The Handbook will include things such as work conditions which will apply to everyone, dispute resolution and codes of conduct.

We are mindful of the need for continuous improvement and to this end have encouraged Councillors and staff to attend training at every opportunity.

Four of our Councillors have recently attended community engagement training in Cairns.

We trust the benefits from such training will flow back to the council and they would be better informed and better understanding of what our Operational Plan in particular entails.

There has been a range of training initiatives undertaken both inside and outside for the staff. We believe the only way we're going to improve the performance of the Council in years to come is to equip the staff with the right tools that will let them perform their jobs to the best of their abilities. Efficiency and effectiveness will depend on the skills they've got and to this end many of them are attending regular workshops inside Lockhart here as well as outside, and we consider this to be a long term investment in our future as a Council.

***“Continuous improvement
... opportunity ...
teamwork”***



A number of new positions have also been created. Some are relatively new, such as the appointment of an electrician, while others are simply replacing staff who have left.

We need to constantly make sure the council is fully staffed and funded, or we will have problems with implementing our Operational Plan, as is expected of us under the Local Government Act.

We intend to make sure that whenever there is an opportunity for employment in Lockhart, standard processes for their appointment will take place.

Finally we have been working on developing a sense of teamwork within the ranks of Council staff.

We have instituted regular monthly staff meetings which are turning out to be a popular way of sharing information.

It provides the council with the opportunity to hear from staff directly about their operations and for the staff to inform the council about their achievements, about their purpose, their problems and perhaps also their solutions for the council to be looking at.

To date the input we have had has been very impressive and I would like to commend the staff for their interest in these meetings.

Community well-served via cheaper & more efficient Cairns office

There have been some very important changes to local government on communities especially in the past four years, says Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council's Corporate Services Director Stanley Mugwiria (pictured).

"They are now required to comply fully with the Local Government Act within their financial reporting requirements," he said.

"The Council has a new structure which has been put in place as part of our current Corporate Plan.

"The Plan has the Council split into departments, which at this stage are Corporate Services, Community Development & Services and Engineering Services."

He said with the new Cairns office up and running staff can now rotate between Cairns and Lockhart River.

"Maybe they could work in Cairns for a month or two and then go back to Lockhart and with that we wanted to expose them to more skills and some very positive working environments," he said.

"We will try things like seeking placements in mainstream Councils in their different departments such as purchasing and payroll.

"This kind of thing will improve their skills which is a great opportunity.

"At the same time there is the chance for people to pursue some courses.

"We just make an arrangement that when they are not in school they are in the office, and that's a very flexible arrangement that allows them to do their work and attend to their studies.

"The other thing about the Cairns office is we can now access highly skilled people on a temporary basis, we have Doreen on a three-month contract and through her we have been able to fix up a number of issues we were lagging behind on."

Mr Mugwiria also said they were about to sort out the Council's budget for the next 12 months.

"For the first time, through a consultant, we are embarking on a very comprehensive budgeting exercise," he said.

"We are supposed to have a budget approved by the Council before the first day of the next financial year.

"We are scheduled to have another audit done on 15 June

and that has become convenient now because of the location of the office – here they can just come in as many times as they want and it doesn't cost us anything to get them here.

"Before that we used to pay for their flights and accommodation in Lockhart for three weeks or so, now they don't even have to spend their petrol, their office is just across the road.

"So we should have our audit completed by the first or second week of July for the first time.

"We are also engaging some internal auditors who will put together an internal control system.

"The first system we started with is coming up with an accounting policy and procedures manual."





Admin, bank & post office staff there to help

Most LRASC staff members will by now be familiar the new system for monitoring attendance and time sheets, says Senior Administration Supervisor Dora Accoom.

She said people should continue to make sure they clocked on and off for the day, or risk not being paid.

She also wanted to remind people that the new machine photographed whoever it was doing the clocking.

“No more clocking on and off for friends,” she said.

“And it calculates the hours automatically because it comes straight into my computer onto a spread sheet with the hours already calculated.

“As people would know we pay every fortnight, but now all I have to do is print it out and fax it to the Cairns office and they do the pays down there, I don’t do it up here any more.

“It’s good because I don’t have so much paperwork on my hands, the only paperwork I get now is applications for leave for holidays or sick days, and travel sheets for meetings, workshops and other activities.”

Dora also said other than the appointment of a new receptionist some months ago, and some movement to and from the Cairns office, administration staff had remained stable.

“There’s just Jasmine, who is an admin/finance officer, Eileen’s the new receptionist and Cassandra (Cassie) is the Housing Officer.

“Desley is the backup for the Centrelink agency, she was up here helping out on reception, and she also helps out in the post office giving out mail, etc, because we’re very busy.

“In the mornings I’m in the bank and the post office and from 1-5pm I’m up here in the admin office doing things which need to go to the Cairns office.

“Fay has been cleaning for us, but she’s really with the road gang.

“ I just want to say that we’re here to help people in the community, especially with the bank and the post office, but overall, we’re here to help.”



Lockhart-based admin staff: Jasmine, Dora, Eileen & Desley



Puuya moving from strength to strength

More than 750 people have used the new Puuya Centre since it was opened in October last year, says Coordinator Tina Gela.

Tina said the Centre was a place where people could feel good and learn, making Puuya stronger.

"Puuya means strengthening life force or heart in Kuuku Ya'u," she said.

"So the purpose of the centre is to strengthen the life force and wellbeing of people in the community.

"A lot of cultural things happen here and we're coordinating some things ourselves, if people have an idea they can come and see us and we can help them to do it."



Tina is working with Department of Communities' Community Development Worker, Denise Hagan, who said she was doing a great job.

"I work for the Department of Communities and I'm assisting the Community Development Team and Tina to set this place up and have it running so I'm not needed any more," she said.

"There's a lot just running this centre, it's just new and we're trying to make everything work well."

Mayor Rodney Accoom said having the Centre was a change for Lockhart.

"I wish something like this could have happened in the 1980s so the elders back then could have been involved and there would have been a lot of history about Lockhart put into the place," he said.

"We're lucky we've still got a few of our elders still alive, they tell their stories and the young boys are doing the recordings at the Puuya Centre, so that's good."

Tina also said people were welcome to drop into the Centre any time to see them.

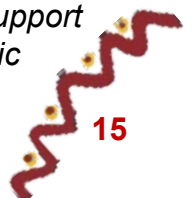
Need to move onto Newstart or other government benefit?



Centrelink Agent Lorraine can help you between the hours of 9am-12pm or 1-4pm daily, but first you need to call the Centrelink Call Centre on 13 63 80 using the phone outside of the office, on the ground floor of the Council building.



Senior Managers from the Westpac group, Stuart Millburn and Cathy Sparkes (above), were in Lockhart in April working on the feasibility of various tourism ventures for the community. The pair were seconded from Westpac for one month to help support Balkanu to increase economic participation and improve community living in Cape York communities.



The next ordinary monthly LRASC meeting is at 10am on 4 June in the Council Chambers.



Council meetings are open to the public.



Councillor portfolios are:

Cr Rodney Accoom: Infrastructure

Cr Paul Piva: Economic Development

Cr Daniel Accoom: Law & Order; Culture; Land & Sea

Cr Danielle Hudson: Community Lifestyle

Cr Marshall Symonds: Finance & Administration



Find out what Tara & Dottie have got to be so happy about on page 6!

Lockhart River Learning Circle 2009

The Lockhart River Council and Mr Rob Setter Government Champion would like to invite all community members to the next Learning Circle.

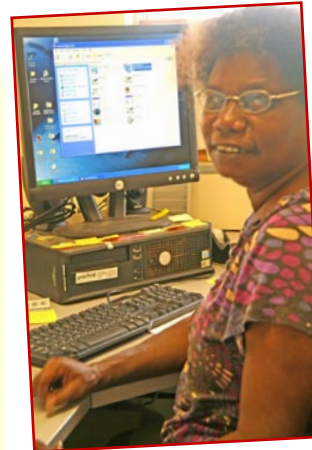
The Learning Circle will commence with a Community BBQ on the evening of Wednesday 10th June 2009 at the Church Hall starting at 6pm.

The Learning Circle will be held at the Old Canteen Thursday 11th June 2009 starting at 10am until 1pm.

Discussion Items for the Learning Circle will include:-

- Child Safety
- Vehicle Permit Systems, licensing and 18+ card information with the Department of Transport and Queensland Police
- Department of Housing Tenancy Agreements
- Education Queensland schooling information
- Learning Circle Update
- General Business, where Community Members have the Opportunity to raise any other issues that they are concerned about.

We are looking forward to seeing you all there!!!



And could it be that Dora is happy because she has less paperwork to do these days? Find out why on page 14!

DO YOU HAVE AN IDEA FOR A CDEP PROJECT?

After July 1 CDEP is changing in a number of ways and will be able to offer a wider variety of projects and activities that help meet the community's needs.

You are invited to come over to the CDEP office and talk to Rod, Linda, Andrew or Johnson about any small or large ideas you have where CDEP participants can assist you, your family, your clan or your friends to complete a project you think would be good for them or the whole community.



Corporate Services staff together in Lockhart before the Cairns office opened in March