

## MEDIA RELEASE

DATE: 22 August 2019

### COUNCIL CONTINUES TO FOCUS ON LONG-TERM SOLUTION FOR MARIA CREEK



*Photo: Current seagrass and sand accumulation in the Maria Creek*

Kingston District Council, following its 20 August Council meeting, held an informal gathering to discuss recent storms and resultant erosion damage along council's coastline. The update included the Maria Creek seagrass influx and short-term boat launch options. This follows council's earlier decision to not make provision in its 2019/20 budget for the excavation of seagrass and sand from the Maria Creek channel.

Acting Mayor Chris England said, "Council must maintain its focus on providing a long-term solution for Maria Creek that is financially sustainable. This can only come from what could potentially be a multi-million-dollar investment to support our economic growth and viability". "We have experienced significant and unprecedented sand and seagrass accumulation within the Maria Creek within the last two years, requiring ongoing financial contribution that is not assumed in our 10-year long term financial plan" Cr England said.

"Council needs to consider its obligation to spend ratepayer money in a responsible and equitable way, and a band-aid solution is no longer an affordable option".

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Short-term options for the 2019/20 fishing season have been considered, however with external funding opportunities limited, Council will continue the status quo in maintaining accesses for beach launching. Council will spend approximately \$20k on the Johnson access, including replacing delineation poles which were lost in a recent storm, maintaining the entrance and rubble the track if required.

Receipt of the scope of works for the 'Maria Creek Sustainable Infrastructure Project' from council's coastal engineers is imminent. Chief Executive Officer Nat Traeger acknowledged that the project will come at significant cost to council and its community. "Once the scope of works is finalised, council will undertake a further period of community engagement to gauge if there is an appetite to proceed with what is expected to be a major capital project."

Recent storm events have not only brought a seagrass influx into Maria Creek, but wreaked havoc on council's coastline. Erosion damage as well as significant sand and seagrass movement have been brought about by huge swells, high tides and gale force winds.

Cr England said, "our coastline is regarded as one of our most precious natural resources and more than that, it is a crucial drawcard for our tourism industry". Council has already applied for state government funding for additional sand bags at Wyomi and will shortly lodge a second application to support the development of a Coastal Management Strategy to inform council's future coastal planning.

"Our coastline is suffering from the effects of major weather events, which have caused significant damage and depleted our beaches of thousands of tonnes of sand" Cr England said. Council is hoping that its bid for funding will be supported to ensure future protection and management strategies for our coast.

- ENDS -

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