

Address to Council at the 11 March 2009 Council Meeting

Mr Mayor, Councillors, the Johns River Community Progress Association would like to thank you for this opportunity to speak in favour of **adopting the Johns River Village Plan**.

Council, the RTA and our Progress Association all made the Johns River Post-Bypass Committee **a great success**, and we certainly look forward to working with Council again on the proposed **Johns River Implementation Group**.

We are very much in favour of adopting the key points of the staff recommendation as so succinctly written **by Robyn Eisermann and her staff**. Point (i), to adopt the plan, and (iv), to form the Johns River Implementation Group, are just fine as-is.

The Association does feel however, that the issues of **ownership and maintenance of the planned facilities**, as outlined in points (ii) and (iii), could be **much more effectively explored** in the Johns River Implementation Group, where the RTA would also be present. We propose that Council direct the Implementation Group to **address the ownership and maintenance issues as a top priority**, and to report back to Council at a specified time. This allows Council and the community **the flexibility and**

opportunity to benefit from the input (and possibly funding) of the RTA.

Basically, the RTA came to the table **in funding our Village Plan**, and we have reasonable expectations of a repeat performance across **a wide variety of issues** in the Implementation Group.

The Group would also be a good place to discuss **the replacement playground**. The previous Council playground had degraded beyond rehabilitation and had to be removed. Unlike in the past, our new facilities will benefit from a **"Whole of Life"** asset management plan, hopefully serving your **Gateway to the Manning** village of Johns River economically into the future.

We are fully aware of the Percy Allen report and **the tough economic times we all have ahead**, with new and challenging conditions to read, and try to understand. We know too that rate pegging in the past has handcuffed Council to addressing more the public demand backlog, than the underlying infrastructure backlog, including facilities – any facilities – for our village.

The **new recessionary era** has brought a change in fiscal policies. Gone are the days of Councils courting ratepayers with **headlines**

of balanced budgets, especially now as our own Federal Government signals loud and clear that **deficit spending on infrastructure**, is the best cushion for a bumpy ride ahead for all of us.

The Local Government and Shires Association agrees with our position that Councils across the country must **bravely buck the traditions** of the last decades and borrow as much as they possibly can, to **close the renewal gap**.

It is only with that massive gap bridged, that we can provide the breathing room needed to fund **much-needed community projects** like ours.

But to get this done, **every citizen of the Manning must know**, that every time they see a pothole or a council asset needing repair, that it is the **State Government's old "planned economy" approach** which has failed them so miserably.

Rigid Key Performance Indicators, debt tied to assets, and the **worst of the lot, rate-pegging**, has robbed Council of it's ability to react to the infrastructure backlog.

Rate pegging has failed to deliver the roads we need, the public facilities we should have, and now, even threatens facilities at Johns River. Rate pegging is killing our village, and we're hardly alone.

Despite the conditions, we feel Council should be **rightly proud of it's accomplishments** at nearby Harrington and Coopernook, where new Council facilities have been

funded on Crown Lands similar to ours.

We are confident such options are best addressed within Council's Johns River Implementation Group. It will benefit greatly from the combined efforts of Council, the RTA and our local organisations. The Group will be **able to source grants and forge an equitable and beneficial realisation of the Johns River Village Plan**.

Mr Mayor, Councillors, thank you for your time and your considered support.
