



# MEDIA RELEASE

## RESERVES AND CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING UPDATE

The Reserves and Conservation Advisory Committee held its second meeting on Tuesday the 22 March in the Council Chambers. Several important topics and issues were discussed including the Draft Cascade Plan of Management, the Toon Trust, a small-animal pound and responsible cat ownership, and a need for an updated list of priority weeds and their management techniques.

Concern was also raised and discussed regarding the issue of the protection of the inshore marine zone around the island. It was of great concern that in recent times people have been taking/harvesting marine life from our small, enclosed reef areas between Cemetery Beach and Slaughter Bay. It is not just observed take, but conditions in these closed bays show evidence of an unbalanced ecosystem, which can be due in part to the harvesting of a variety of species which are essential to maintaining that balance. This is occurring in areas traditionally valued for their high level of biodiversity. Sea urchins are important herbivores on coral reefs, they play a critical role in maintaining the balance between coral and algae. Urchins contribute to reef resilience by grazing algae and providing settlement space for corals, thereby helping to maintain conditions necessary for coral communities to recover after acute disturbances (such as storms or bleaching events). Committee members recognised the importance of community education on this issue and engaging with community stakeholders, including Australian Marine Parks and the Council of Elders.

The topics discussed and any recommendations made from the committee will be an integral part of Council decision making during Council's Administration under Mr Mike Colreavy, providing an opportunity for direct community input. The committee is also an opportunity for various stakeholders to collaborate on specific issues, particularly between the community and other government agencies, such as the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications and Parks Australia.

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