



Council considers info centre relocation

David Anthony

THE Atherton Visitor Information Centre (VIC) could be relocated to the Priors Creek Precinct as part of its proposed redevelopment.

Tablelands Regional Council considered several relocation options which its tourism, culture and events coordinator Gwyneth Nevard put on the table at its last general meeting.

This followed a decision of the previous council in November last year to consider relocating the VIC to Atherton Chinatown as part of a proposed redevelopment.

The previous council acknowledged that the centre in Main St was experiencing falling numbers because of lack of carparking.

Ms Nevard said the co-location with Chinatown offered lots of parking, but was not on Main St and was not on a major access to the town.

Several sites in the Priors Creek Precinct, on the other hand, would be part of a tourism hub, was close to the central business district and led to the Rail Trail and the Mt Baldy mountain bike track.

"But it would need excellent

parking and signage," she said.

Another option was next to the Atherton library and Tableland Regional Gallery in Robert St, which provided good parking for recreation vehicles as well as cars and would encourage people to use the council facilities.

"Option four is staying put, but we are experiencing falling visitor numbers," Ms Nevard said.

"Across the VICs on the Tablelands, visitor numbers are going up. But not at Atherton. We are missing opportunities to drive tourism on the Tablelands."

Deputy Mayor Katrina Spies favoured one of the Priors Creek options.

"We know that Atherton VIC is the gateway to the whole region and I would like to see it close to the retail centre," she said.

Councillor Spies referred to statistics that showed at least 50 per cent of visitors to the area stayed at least one night because they had called in to the centre.

Cr Kate Eden preferred the library option and felt Chinatown should be ruled out.

Ms Nevard said relocation

would be expensive, so it was important for council to be careful and take its time to "get it right".

Council, on the motion of Crs Spies and Samantha Banks, resolved that council continue to explore the options for relocation as part of the Priors Creek master plan, allowing for other options to be considered as well.

Further, council would introduce regulated parking around the Atherton VIC to ensure vehicle turnover and better access to the centre.

The Chinatown option would not be pursued, but council would encourage the National Trust to work with cycling groups and Atherton Herberton Historic Railway Inc to continue developing Chinatown as a regional tourism destination.

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RV stop is moving forward

Hwy site acquired for rest stop

By **PETER CARRUTHERS**

AFTER more than two years the battle to have an RV friendly driver reviver on the Bruce Hwy at Proserpine moved a step closer last week.

A site for the free RV rest stop on the corner of the Bruce Hwy and Taylor St has been offered by Wilmar and would be leased to make the project a reality.

Proserpine Chamber of Commerce secretary Karen Vloedmans was "extremely pleased" to announce the proposed site for the driver reviver to chamber members last week.

"This site would provide Proserpine, and in particular this stretch of Bruce Hwy, with a much-needed stop (and) driver reviver facility, by way of a free RV site, providing a place of rest for up to 48 hours," she said.

Ms Vloedmans said in the past 30 years there had never been an RV driver reviver site in the Whitsundays with the exception of Collinsville last year. "The chamber prepared an impact study for council in April last year and we undertook this project as of February last year," she said.

"We as a chamber have been pushing through... to

find the ideal parcel of land. We successfully have that offering from Wilmar now. It really is a boon for

the town... and it ticks a lot of boxes on a national Caravan Motorhomes and Camping Association level as far as proximity to dump points and information centres."

Manager of Proserpine's Wilmar mill Danny Van der Berg said the company supported the planned local driver reviver stop.

"We have been talking about this for over 12 months and trying to overcome the hurdles of access to the property itself and understanding who the stakeholders are," he said.

"The council are on board and Karen and the chamber have done an excellent job in pushing this one along. We are now at a point where we may have some solutions."

Members of the PCOC, the Whitsunday Regional Council, Department of Transport and Main Roads and Wilmar met to discuss access for the site earlier this month.

"The result of this meeting is that council will undertake a community consultation for the project and review with DTMR the associated costs for the access to this site, so we can work through funding options for members," Ms Vloedmans said.

"We thank Wilmar, council and DTMR for their collaborative approach."

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LAND OFFERED: Proserpine Chamber of Commerce members Andrew Barker, Brooke Mansfield, secretary Karen Vloedmans and Wilmar mill manager Danny Van der Berg at the proposed site on Monday. PHOTO: PETER CARRUTHERS