

Bikeway attracts criticism from C4

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Cassowary Coast Regional Councillor Jennifer Downs has refuted claims by environmental group C4 that the Mission Beach bikepath/walkway is a hazard to the southern cassowary.

C4 claims the threat to the bird is dire with the construction of the 3.2 kilometre shared bike-way/walkway beside Cassowary Drive between Marcs Park and Wongaling Beach.

The criticism comes before construction of the bikeway is completed.

C4 spokesperson Liz Gallie said the bikeway has widened the road creating a larger open area at a known cassowary road crossing.

"Community excitement at funds being made available for a long await-

ed and lobbied for bikeway is now giving way to the reality that what should be introducing a slower pace and lowering the impact of traffic in the high biodiversity area now has serious implications for the cassowary," Ms Gallie said.

"The development of a bikeway linking two of the villages is threatening to pose further obstacles to the cassowary after unprecedented urban development in the area has denied the endangered species free access to some of its essential habitat."

Ms Gallie claims a local witness a cassowary attempting to climb the path's embankment but it was too steep for the cassowary to cross.

The local then questioned Council's planning of the bikeway, according to Ms Gallie.

Community input was

encouraged during the pathway planning process where residents, government departments and the general community were invited to attend the public consultation meetings.

Cr Downs said the community as a whole needs to look for innovative solutions to live and cohabitate with the cassowaries.

"In my personal opinion, a reduction in speed limit is essential along there now, as the traffic volume and accident potential increases," she said.

"My ultimate aim is to have the speed limit along Cassowary Drive reduced to a people friendly and cassowary friendly 60 kilometres an hour.

"As far as the bikepath/walkway is concerned, it is being built to Australian Standards and follows the natural contour of the land that has always existed.

"The bikeway project was also part of the Johnstone Shire Council's cycleway strategy and has been in planning for at least 15 years.

"It is really important to enhance the positives of this pathway; Mission Beach is such an obvious place to have a great bike-way strategy.

"Eventually it will provide an all weather access

between Mission Beach and Wongaling Beach and the appearance of the bike-way will be softened with vegetation.

"It is going to provide connectivity between Marcs Park and Wongaling Beach for children who will be able to ride their bikes to and from the sporting grounds and the future pool, which is closer to a reality.

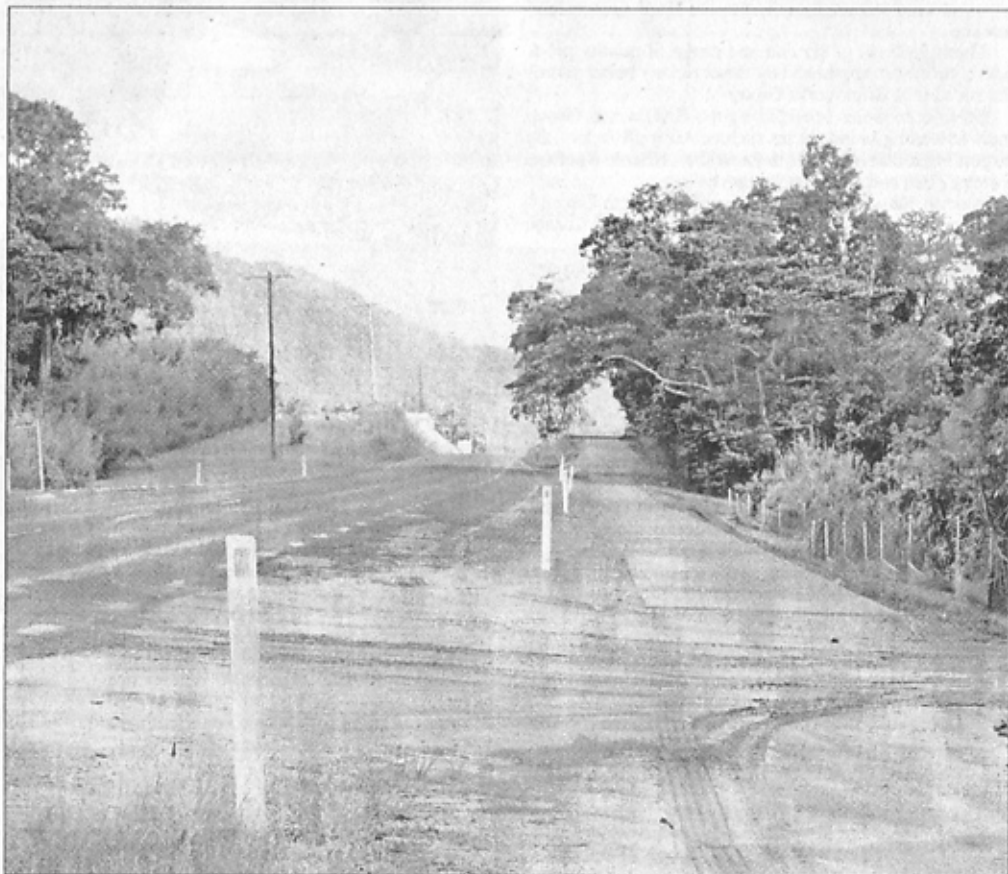
"It is also all about safety for our children, walkers and cyclists who will be able to travel along Cassowary Drive without traffic and terrain to contend with.

"Under the Liveable Cassowary Coast Program the health benefits for children and residents are enhanced; we want a healthy lifestyle for our citizens.

"This is only one chunk of the bikeways for the area.

"Our ultimate goal is to have a beautiful cycleway from South Mission Beach to Bingil Bay, with some of it along the beaches, and I am going to look for a slice of every budget to achieve this goal.

"This is a positive development for Mission Beach in so many ways."



DIFFICULT PATH: The Mission Beach Bikeway and excessive speed along Cassowary Drive have been described by C4 as obstacles to the cassowary.