



Celebrating 30 Years of Community Engagement

Our association was formed thirty years ago when our then councillor Lesley Clark door-knocked Stratford and Freshwater to gauge residents' interest in forming a representative group for our two suburbs. In those days we were part of the Mulgrave Shire, later amalgamating with Cairns City Council (1995) which subsequently became Cairns Regional Council (2008).

The inaugural meeting of the Stratford/Freshwater Ratepayers & Residents Association was held in the Stratford Community Hall on 19 November 1985 with 26 people in attendance. Our first committee comprised Rex Neeley as president, Alan McPherson as vice president, Carol Whiffler as secretary and Mary Mackenzie as treasurer. The first general meeting on 3 December 1985 involved different opinions on the desirability of upgrading the suburbs from septic tank usage to reticulated sewerage.

From that time the association's presidents have been Rex Neeley, Margaret More, Margaret Marton, Ron Crew, Kevin Mackenzie, Phill Carlon, Julie O'Neill and Paul Matthews.

Stratford and Freshwater have been represented on council by Lesley Clark, Ross Parisi, Graham Knell, John Harders, Annette Sheppard, Brian Down, Alan McPherson, Margaret Cochrane, Alan Blake and Jessie Richardson.

State government Members for Barron River have been Lesley Clark, Lyn Warwick, Lesley Clark (again), Steve Wettenhall, Michael Trout and Craig Crawford.

The association was incorporated in 2005 and changed its name to Stratford and Freshwater Community Association Inc.

Throughout the life of the association we have maintained regular contact and good relations with our divisional representatives and state members. We have been involved in wide-ranging issues and some challenges. We supply information to the community and provide a forum for residents to raise concerns and receive feedback from council or government. We can claim a number of achievements and wins, as well as a few lost battles.

A summary of the years follows:

1985

Association formed in November. First general meeting in December.

1985-1992

Sewerage. The association's first and ongoing meetings sought opinions on the need for sewerage installation, highlighting divided views for financial and environmental reasons. In 1989 the Mulgrave Shire Council rates included a partial levy for installation of sewerage, prompting a number of well-attended meetings including one at Freshwater State School, due to divided community views. However, Council proceeded with installation and the sewerage system was operational in 1992.

1986-2009

Neighbourhood Character Precincts. The wish to preserve the history and character of Stratford was first raised at a meeting in 1986. In 1988 the association prepared a submission, signed by some 70 residents, to the Mulgrave Shire Council for a development control plan (precursor to neighbourhood character precinct). The association continued to urge progress on the draft document, but this was not achieved by

the time MSC amalgamated with Cairns City Council in 1995. A fresh process was commenced by the new council and after the association hosted information meetings about the new planning scheme for Cairns, members submitted responses to the proposed Cairns Plan and attained a character precinct for Stratford. Freshwater residents, alarmed at the intrusion of units into their suburb at the expense of many of the older houses, had also been lobbying for a character precinct. Cairns Regional Council embarked on an extensive review and public consultation into character precincts in 2009, resulting in the creation of the Freshwater Character Precinct and its incorporation in the new Cairns Plan in 2010.

1986 onwards

Jalara Park. In 1986 the association started working with the local state member and councillors & staff of the Mulgrave Shire Council to keep the majority of a large parcel of former education department land in Stratford for a park. Following gazettal of the land as park, a community day was held on the land in May 1994. The association worked with council and botanical experts to develop a planting plan and several community planting days were organised. The association supports the original intention to create a native species arboretum in the top area of the park grading to mixed recreation use lower down. The association has resisted attempts to reserve portions of the park for exclusive use by particular groups, arguing that it should remain open public space. Jalara Park, one of the largest urban parks in the region, continues to be a focus and priority for the Association. The Association awaits the Council audit of parks so that the Jalara Park master plan can be reviewed prior to continuing tree planting activities.

Walking track. Since the establishment of Jalara Park, the association has lobbied for a walking track linking the park with the Blue Arrow Track. While so far unsuccessful, strong partnerships have been established and we will continue to investigate this issue.

Some other early issues for the association were –

- 1988/89 succeeded in having trucks which were carting fill from a Redlynch quarry along Kamerunga Road to the new international airport, to reduce their speed and cover their loads.
- 1992 achieved widening of the narrow road between Stratford to Aeroglen to provide more space for bicycles.
- 1994 wrote to Qld Electoral Commission objecting to their proposal to move Freshwater to a separate division after amalgamation of Mulgrave Shire and Cairns City.
- 1995 successfully lobbied for a uniform 60km/hr speed limit along Kamerunga Road instead of the previous mix of 60km/hr and 70km/hr.

1990-1993

Railway beautification. After lengthy negotiations between the Mulgrave Shire Council and the Railways Department, in March and June 1993 the association conducted community tree plantings between the road and a section of railway line near Hardwick Street Stratford using native species and a plan approved by Railways. The young trees were mulched, watered and weeded by members until they were self sufficient. Sadly, this bit of association history was lost with the recent construction of council's now well-used bike track.

1990-2003

Grave site of Constable Michael Dwyer. From 1990 the association lobbied to have the early grave site of Constable Michael Dwyer moved from the bank of the Barron River to save it from loss through erosion of the riverbank. Initially it was suggested that the grave be relocated to Jalara Park, but it was later decided a better position would be near the Stratford War Memorial. No human remains were found during the July 2003 archaeological dig by JCU and volunteers, but fragments of the coffin, other artefacts and the original headstone were removed to the new location under police escort. It is interesting to note that the excavation took place close to the 126th anniversary of Constable Dwyer's death on 20 July 1877, and artefacts found at the gravesite were re-interred on Police National Remembrance Day, 29 September 2003. Both locations of the grave are included on the Stratford Heritage Trail.

1988-2000

Public toilets for Stratford shopping village and library

This issue was first raised by the association in November 1988. In 1989 Mulgrave Shire Council laid formwork near the library, but after objections from some residents work ceased and funding was transferred to another suburb. In February 1999 a petition containing some 700 signatures from local and surrounding residents was presented to our local councillors, resulting in a council budget allocation and display of plans at the end of 1999 for a toilet block next to the Stratford library. However, some residents were concerned at the size of the proposal and the possibility of loiterers.

A well-attended meeting in January 2000 resolved that there be no stand-alone public toilet in Stratford; that the budget allocation be reserved for capital works at Stratford; that the library be retained and the upgraded and expanded library include internal public toilets for use during library hours; and that the library hours be expanded to include Saturday mornings.

2000-2009

Stratford Library

After amalgamation of MSC and CCC in 1995, a review found that the Stratford library did not meet prevailing State Library regulations and also that the building was structurally unsound. Council was considering whether to replace the existing building or build in Redlynch, while the association strongly supported a larger new building in Stratford.

The association led the fight to keep the Stratford library open when it seemed in doubt; one of the association's "standing room only" meetings (January 2001) was in response to the threat to the library. The association put strong arguments to Council's review of its library services, and in late 2006 welcomed Council's decision to build a new state-of-the-art Stratford Library and Meeting Room with public toilet facilities. In July 2008 Cairns Regional Council awarded a contract for this project and it was officially opened on 14 April 2009. During the demolition/construction period the community hall was unavailable so SAFCA meetings were held at the Stratford Bowls Club or Freshwater State School.

2002-2013

Stratford shopping village upgrade

Ongoing discussions with Council re improvements to Stratford shopping village, including parking and traffic calming, culminated in the long-awaited make-over in 2013. Council works were preceded by meetings after Cairns Regional Council initially proposed to remove the existing trees with no prior consultation with residents. However, after a period of unrest for residents and traders, the result has been welcomed.

2007/2009

Freshwater Heritage Trail

Friends of Freshwater, led by Angela Murphy and SAFCA president Paul Matthews, initiated, researched, developed and obtained Cairns Regional Council funding for the Freshwater Heritage Trail which was opened on 20 June 2009 by Mayor Val Schier.

2009

Stratford Heritage Trail

With funding assistance through Qld Government Q150, Cairns Regional Council and sponsorship of local businesses and residents, the Stratford Heritage Trail was launched on 21 November 2009 at the Stratford library. Over 100 people participated in workshops and the launch with photos, historical information and heritage trail brochure (available at www.stratfordhistory.org.au). Heritage trail brochures are also available at local businesses and Stratford library. Both the Freshwater and Stratford Heritage Trail brochures are available on the Cairns Regional Council site – about our region.

<http://www.cairns.qld.gov.au/about-our-region/cairns-heritage/drives,-trails-and-walks>

SAFCA members conduct regular inspections of both heritage trails to clean the signs and monitor any damage or deterioration.

2010

Management of the Stratford Community Hall

Council reversed its earlier decision to sell the Stratford community hall and land after the opening of the new library building, and instead used Commonwealth Government funds to re-roof the hall, refurbish the interior and install improved drainage in the grounds. To ensure an open process for management of the hall, SAFCA lobbied that the expression of interest process be reopened by council and we explored the possibility of managing the hall ourselves. SAFCA was successful and commenced management in August 2010. Through the dedication of our successive volunteer hall coordinators the hall is being used by a range of community groups including singers and magicians, health gurus and mini maestros.

2014

Stratford Community Garden

After meeting Council's requirements, a small community garden was established behind the hall last year. A number of raised gardens can be rented by members, and the operation and maintenance of the garden is enthusiastically overseen by one of our members. SAFCA appreciates the donated materials it has received from hardware and raw materials businesses, particularly during establishment of the garden.

2014/2015

Character precincts and Draft Cairns Planning Scheme

In December 2014 SAFCA lodged a submission to the Cairns Draft Plan against council's proposal to reduce (by about 60%) Freshwater's Character Precinct, as well as a small section of Stratford's. This was followed in early 2015 by a SAFCA deputation to inform CRC councillors and planners of our concerns and re-emphasise our desire to maintain the integrity of the Freshwater precinct.

In September 2015, SAFCA was dismayed to find Council had dismissed SAFCA's representations and continued with their proposed changes to excise large swathes from the character precinct. As the next stage is approval of the planning scheme by the Qld Government, SAFCA is assessing the best way to progress this issue.

2015

Moule Cottage, 233 Kamerunga Road Freshwater

The owner of this property initially intended to demolish the cottage in order to develop the land for units. SAFCA was alarmed that not only was an early residence in Freshwater (identified by Council as a building of historical significance and also listed on the Freshwater Heritage Trail) under threat but the development proposed for the land was not in keeping with the general character of the suburb. Our divisional councillor endeavoured unsuccessfully to find a home for the cottage before the project was put on hold by the developer. An article in the Cairns Post in July 2015 highlights SAFCA's concern and provides the history of the cottage.

2015

Drainage issues in Stratford and Freshwater

This matter has been ongoing for the life of the association, but has become an increasing problem as a result of inappropriate hillside development, and earthworks and interference with creeks by developers. After heavy rain in February, a number of residents reported flooding of their properties to the association's February meeting. For some residents this followed other flooding events in March 2012 and subsequent years, on properties that had never previously flooded. The councillor advised that council was preparing a comprehensive plan of Stratford and Freshwater drainage problems, but would attend to urgent short term works in the meantime. She requested residents email their issues to council. A consultant has now been engaged to work with council and residents on the Mt Whitfield North Drainage Management Plan, and it is hoped meaningful progress will have been achieved by the first quarter of

2016. Affected residents are awaiting contact from the consultant in order to relate their particular experiences.

2015

Proposed changes to council divisional boundaries

In September, SAFCA discovered the changes which are proposed by the Qld Electoral Commission to the Cairns Regional Council divisional boundaries for the March 2016 local government election. The intended changes would remove Stratford and Freshwater from Division 8, and place them in Divisions 5 and 6 respectively. This would mean that not only our closely aligned suburbs would be moved to separate divisions with which we have no direct geographical link and few common interests and issues, but also that we would lose our long-established links with the three closest beach communities in Division 8. SAFCA lodged an objection in the very short timeframe available, and it is pleasing that many Stratford and Freshwater residents responded to SAFCA's call to lodge individual objections by the due date. To date, the Government's Change Commission has not made a final decision.

2015

Subdivision and building approvals in Stratford and Freshwater

SAFCA is very concerned over the increasing number of development applications and approvals for reconfiguration (subdivision) of large allotments in both suburbs, and the construction of unit blocks and residences, with little regard to zoning, character precincts or amenity of the surrounding neighbourhoods. SAFCA expressed these concerns at a meeting in October 2015 with council's town planning staff and divisional councillor.

Other development issues

In past years, the association has convened meetings on controversial development issues and facilitated residents' attempts to ensure developments are appropriate to the area. This includes hill slope developments, unit complexes and proposals to develop the Barron delta.

Examples are the special meetings – very well attended – organized to discuss various multiunit proposals on the hill slopes above Stratford (e.g. Ulysses development); the fate of the Stratford caravan park land; the sub-division above Dalziel Street; a proposed bus depot on the former chicken farm site; a unit block in Marett Street; the unit complex proposed for the Freshwater Hotel site (now a child care centre); and the proposed Delta Park development (the latter meeting held in conjunction with Machen's Beach Community Association).

The development application concerning Savina's farm at Lower Freshwater received a considerable number of objections and submissions before the application was withdrawn. The sand mining application at Kamerunga caused angst within the small community of Kamerunga and Peace Lutheran College. A well organized vocal group of concerned citizens set up meetings, a web site www.sandmine.com.au, and a petition. Over 100 submissions were lodged against the proposal.

The Association's involvement in some development issues, such as the subdivision above Dalziel Street, has continued for years as members do research, compile submissions and lobby representatives to try to protect the character of our area. The drainage problems caused by this subdivision continue to be a focus for the association.

When **Friends of Freshwater** was formed in 2005, SAFCA supported their concerns about inappropriate development in Freshwater, such as the units proposal for the Freshwater Hotel site, the redevelopment of Freshwater Connection and various multi-unit applications in single dwelling and heritage areas (e.g. Old Smithfield Road and Martin Street). Friends of Freshwater had some significant wins in protecting the character of Freshwater. SAFCA members joined Friends of Freshwater to meet Qld Rail representatives to present residents' views on the proposed development of Freshwater Connection. Issues formerly pursued by Friends of Freshwater are now addressed by SAFCA.

The association submitted to the ministerial review of the Integrated Planning Act. Our submissions were informed by our involvement in local development proposals and conversations with other community groups with similar issues. In May 2008 the association wrote to the then Minister for Infrastructure & Planning enquiring about the status of the Review and repeated our concerns with the IPA including old approvals and Private Certifiers.

Members of the association attended FNQ2025 meetings, and submitted suggestions. As a result of the gazetting of this overarching planning instrument we hope for better protection of our beautiful hills and slopes around Cairns.

SAFCA continues to try to maintain the amenity and liveability of Stratford and Freshwater in accordance with our stated Objects.

SAFCA's **committee** comprises president Paul Matthews, secretary Gwenda Gray and treasurer Jacquie Courtnell;

SAFCA's **member contact person** is Patricia Graves (email safca.contact@gmail.com);

the Stratford **community hall** coordinator is Amber Peters (for enquires and bookings call 0438-247-485);

the Stratford **community garden** coordinator is Dee Brown

For more information about SAFCA please:

- follow us on Twitter **@safca_org**
- like us on Facebook at **Stratford and Freshwater Community Association**
- check out our Stratford Heritage Trail site at **www.stratfordhistory.org.au**
- find the Freshwater Heritage Trail at **www.cairns.qld.gov.au/about-our-region/cairns-heritage/drives,-trails-and-walks**
- or email Safca Contact at **safca.contact@gmail.com**