

MEDIA RELEASE

10th July 2020

Julia Creek Caravan Park Artesian Bathhouses Re-opening

Following Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk's announcement of Stage 3 Easing of COVID-19 Restrictions effective 12 noon on July 3, McKinlay Shire Council has been able to reopen a popular tourist attraction at its renowned Caravan Park.

The reopening of the bathhouses has also coincided with Council unveiling two new 'Boundary Rider' style huts along with new landscaping and a water feature in what is sure to expand the popularity of the existing four replica rainwater tank style bathhouses.

Tourism Minister Kate Jones said today's announcement was a great win for the outback tourism industry. "Because Queenslanders have done such a great job fighting COVID-19, we can now start to focus on our economic recovery," she said. "We know that Aussies are itching to get out of the house and escape winter. Outback Queensland is the perfect place for a holiday."

The completion of the new huts which will provide guests with an extended luxury experience was made possible with assistance from the Department of Innovation, Tourism Industry Development and the Commonwealth Games (DITID) Outback Tourism Infrastructure Fund program. The \$10 million Outback Tourism Infrastructure (OTI) Fund will contribute to realising the government's vision for future proofing the tourism industry in Outback Queensland. The OTI Fund is a key element of the Queensland Government's economic development agenda to build resilient businesses, regions and communities by creating sustainable new jobs and increasing visitor expenditure.

Tourism Minister Kate Jones also added, "We're investing in outback tourism and new infrastructure like these artesian baths because we know this industry has huge potential to create local jobs and stimulate the local economy. We'll continue to work with McKinlay Shire Council to support this industry and create more opportunities for locals."

Council was successful in securing \$244,924.57 towards completing the Julia Creek Caravan Park Artesian Bath and Landscaping Project. This project dovetails off the success of Council's previous \$1 million investment in the Park that resulted in the establishment of the existing bathhouses which capitalised on the therapeutic properties of naturally occurring water from the Great Artesian Basin. The new project further enhances the popularity of the bath experience by offering guests the opportunity to relish the natural beauty of an outback sunset whilst being surrounded by a bevy of native flora and fauna. The 'Boundary Rider' huts are a testament to a bygone era where men lived a life of solitude whilst managing stock and fences along the boundaries of adjoining stations. Whilst these huts are a far cry from the bare, wrought iron shacks boundary riders resided in, Council is optimistic it will provide guests with an unparalleled Outback Queensland Experience.

McKinlay Shire Tourism Portfolio Councillor Janene Fegan is confident the new bathhouses will be even more highly sought after than the current collection. "The existing bathhouses are a proven success which is indicated by increased visitation and expenditure at the Caravan Park and positive feedback Council has received via social media and word of mouth" said Cr Fegan. Cr Fegan also added, "The new set of bathhouses will offer a very unique and luxurious experience as visitors will be soaking their cares away in replica Boundary Rider Huts which are deeply connected with the Shire's History. The construction of the bathhouses also helped support local contractors and small business during a period of downturn following years of drought, the 2019 flood event and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Visitation to the area and the use of the bathhouses has been put on hold, but now the restrictions have eased, McKinlay Shire Council looks forward to things getting into full swing and welcoming many more visitors to the area".

Although the Caravan Park has lacked the presence of guests, the popularity of the bathhouse experience never wavered. The Park Managers have reported a substantial amount of enquiries over the past months whilst travellers were required to stay home until advised otherwise. Phone calls and emails have been received from all over Australia in anticipation for the easing of restrictions which would allow guests to finally treat themselves to the grandeur of the Artesian Bath Experience. As of the morning of Friday July 3, the new boundary rider huts were fully booked in eagerness from guests to be able to say they were one of the first individuals to immerse themselves in the beauty of the artesian water.

Council is hopeful the demand for the bath experience will continue deep into 2020 as people are allowed to freely travel within Queensland. The increase in visitors should also provide a much needed economic stimulus for the Shire and other rural communities so heavily reliant on tourism expenditure.

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