

GYMPIE REGIONAL COUNCIL

MyCoast Cooloola – Coastal Monitoring App Case Study

Summary

The purpose of the project was to develop the MyCoast Cooloola App to gather information utilising citizen science principles and be a platform to engage and inform the community about the Cooloola Coast. The data and information gathered via the app can then be used to inform and refine coastal hazard adaptation planning.

The MyCoast App has provided a basic coastal citizen science-based web application which can be used to gather information, engage and inform the community and visitors about Cooloola Coast and its environmental values, and inform Council on potential coastal resilience works.

The MyCoast App assists with assessing beach areas, identifying localised flora and fauna, recording visual water quality, and reporting pollution sources. Data gathered via the app can inform and refine coastal hazard adaptation planning. This should lead to better longer-term outcomes where community has ownership and interest in the area and activities protecting our coastal foreshore.

Project Overview

The MyCoast Cooloola App included project initiation, Community consultation, Web App development, user acceptance testing (UAT) and a soft launch of the App.

The MyCoast App aimed to collect and use data and information to make better decisions surrounding coastal management requirements, primarily to protect impacted environments and values along the foreshore areas and for the benefit of the local community.

The broader promotion of the MyCoast App has been delayed in order to better refine function and content to encourage and retain user connection with and use of the MyCoast App.



Benefits of Design for Project Delivery

Drivers

Council and community are aware of the potential and actual impacts from erosion along the Cooloola Coast Foreshore and shoreline.

Understanding coastal and other process' which impact on our coastline, is as important in knowing the solutions needed to mitigate those process and protect our natural environment.

Council's MyCoast Cooloola App provides an opportunity for Council to connect with Community, and Community to connect with our natural assets along the Cooloola Coast Foreshore.

Benefits

The main benefit to date has been engaging directly with the Coastal Community via Cooloola CoastCare Group in administering the operational use of the MyCoast App.

Whilst a delay in the broader promotion of the MyCoast app has occurred, this delay aims to improve the adoption and use of the App by the Community and provide longer term benefits to our Coastal Foreshore Areas. .

Community Engagement and environmental awareness leading to improved environmental outcomes is the broadest council and community benefit and most valuable.

Engagement Activities

GRC commenced Stakeholder Consultation through a Community Survey on the development and use for a Coastal Monitoring App. Over 200 respondents provided content indicating a Coastal App would provide value to Council and Community.

Over 80% of respondent's ranked the Foreshore and Natural Environment as the most important value of Cooloola Coast.

Coastline erosion and fauna images were the higher order features of a proposed Coastal App, with over 90% wanting fauna identification to be a Coastal App feature.

GRC networked with Councils at the QCoast2100 Forum in Townsville 2024, distributing the MyCoast App QR Code and presenting to LGAQ Peer network in October to further engage Councils for feedback on the MyCoast App.

Process / Guidance

Council acknowledges the support of LGAQ for their QCoast2100 Program, funding and QCoast2100 Peer Workshops to assist Council undertaking QCoast2100 Project Works.

The MyCoast App was an innovative solution to community engagement and citizen science, as well as monitoring coastal values along the Cooloola Coastline.

The ongoing use and development of the MyCoast Cooloola App is being facilitated by the Cooloola CoastCare Group who have a wealth of knowledge and passion for our unique coastal foreshore areas, and is a critical component of environmental awareness, stewardship and action for Council.

Problems / Challenges

It was a quite an ambitious undertaking for a Local Government Council without any expertise, knowledge, understanding, internal support or resources to develop a web-based app. The Project was plagued by project challenges and lessons learnt, and whilst these are succinctly noted below, the general lesson learnt, is to ensure the right project stakeholders are:

- *in agreement prior to any project undertaking;*
- *that planning and scheduling prior to commencement is a priority;*
- *that resources and funds are adequate;*
- *that risks and contingencies are identified; and*
- *that capability and capacity are adequate for the scope of the project works.*

Other Lessons learnt;

- *Read the contract.*
- *Ensure project planning undertaken properly.*
- *Ensure stakeholder engagement is robust.*
- *Ensure project handover/s are complete, correct, and accurately account for project risks.*
- *Ensure project timeframes and estimation of tasks timeframes to include contingencies for unaccounted for risks to project.*

The challenges for this project were addressed by spending additional time and resources on rectifying areas needing amendment or additional effort, and higher level of communications.

Outcomes / Conclusions

- *The primary project objective and outcome was an online public facing citizen science app and to assist council and community to engage and consider environmental values and performance within the coastal foreshore areas.*
- *In light of challenges faced, the key lessons learnt will be to consider more adequate chronology and timeframes for milestone activities.*
- *Council's next step is to take the MyCoast Monitoring App and use it to engage community and assist in good decision making.*

Project Partners & Stakeholders

The My Coast Cooloola App could not have been possible without the funding and support of the QCoast2100 Program Manager and support staff. It is an initiating phase project for a broader Construction Project to remediate the erosion occurring along our unique foreshore environment.

The design phase included consultation with:

- *Gympie Regional Council - Environment Services Team;*
- *Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation;*
- *LGAQ Web Development Team; and*
- *Cooloola CoastCare Group Incorporated.*

The ongoing development and use for Gympie regional communications Plan developed as part of the design phase includes more extensive community and stakeholder engagement throughout pre-construction, construction and post construction phases of the Crab Creek Project. Those communications will include Council, Community, Business and Tourism representatives.



For more information

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