

MEDIA RELEASE

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Council funding community projects in economic downturn

In a sign of the economic times, there has been an influx of community groups and individuals applying for grants from Townsville City Council.

Today's meeting of the Lifestyle and Community Development Committee received 90 applications for financial assistance, ranging from festivals, workshops and exhibitions to publications, community projects, facility improvements and training.

In an endeavour to fund as many initiatives as possible with the strongest community benefit, the committee approved 37 requests.

Committee chair Cr Jenny Lane said the council had maintained the funding level of the previous two councils, but the economic downturn had prompted an increase in applicants.

"This isn't surprising, given the current economic climate, and we are doing our best to fund as many groups and individuals as possible," she said. "We're trying to spread the resources further by funding more. By all means, we want groups to come to us and we will do everything we can."

"With the economic downturn we are encouraging applicants to be resourceful and persistent, to apply in another round or consider alternative funding bodies such as the Breakwater Island Casino Community Benefit Fund."

Groups that were successful include the Spinal Injuries Association in Cranbrook which will receive \$5000 to educate local school children about preventing spinal injuries.

"Every application is considered on its merits and we do look at community benefits as a return on investment," Cr Lane said.

"For a dollar a child, the Spinal Education Awareness Team (SEAT) will educate 5000 local children about how to prevent spinal injuries. That's more than a-sixth of the students in the city."

"Queensland has up to 90 spinal cord injuries a year, mostly people aged 15 to 30, so reaching children before this high-risk period is vital."

Spinal Injuries Association CEO Mark Henley said the grant would enable local SEAT presenter Scott Stidston to share his experience of how he sustained a spinal cord injury and to impart important injury prevention messages, at no cost to schools or their students.

"Scott has been an integral part of the SEAT program for the past 16 years. In that time he has spoken to many thousands of Queensland children," Mr Henley said. "Currently there is no cure for a spinal cord injury, which is why prevention programs such as SEAT are so important."

Other successful applicants included Rollingstone's Pineapple Festival to be held in October, a seniors' lunch at the Northern Beaches, and clarinettist Alisha Fong who will attend training camps at the Queensland Conservatorium.

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