



Report on the  
Blackwater Housing Forum  
Blackwater Civic Centre  
Thursday 13th May 2004

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

### ***Duaringa Shire Council***

Gary Howard	Mayor
Ian Ogden	Chief Executive Officer
Dom Carroll	Deputy Chief Executive Officer/Director of Corporate Services
Andrew Reid	Director of Customer and Community Services
Warren Bolton	Planning and Environment Consultant
Lynda Connell	Community Development Officer
Alice Horswood	Councillor
Kev Cracknell	Councillor

### ***Other***

Kim Stokes	Anglicare (also DSC)
Myke Cavanagh	AUSCO Building Systems
Barry O'Connor	AUSCO Building Systems
Henry Milanovic	AUSCO Building Systems
Garth Schoermer	Barclay Mowlem
Dave Wise	Blackwater Caravan Park
Bill Jackson	Blackwater Real Estate
Lloyd McDonald	Blackwater Town Centre
Mark Hill	BMA Mine Manager
Bruce Kennedy	BMA Township and Property Manager
Brendan Waters	BMA Blackwater Coal Preparation Plant Project Manager
Dianne Rogers	BMA Human Resources
John Duggan	Bottletree Motel and Caravan Park
Wendy Yardy	Community Housing Resource Worker
Alyson Brady	Cook Resource Mining
Anne-Marie Mills	Cook Resource Mining
John Heaps	Curragh Queensland Mining
Arthur Hunt	Department of Communities Project Officer
Frank Perry	Department of Housing
Jenny Anselme	Department of Housing
Anthony White	Department of Natural Resources, Mines & Energy
Kathy Williamson	Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy
Brad Carter	Department of State Development
Peter & Jennie Cope	Local Residents/Local Builder
Jacqui Kennedy	Local Resident/Small Business Owner (also DSC)
Vince Lucas	Local Resident
James Wirth	Local Resident/Australian Commercial Agents (Real Estate)
Kelly Murphy	Yarrabee Coal Company

Apologies were received from Jim Pearce MP & Kirsten Livermore MP



## INTRODUCTION

The forum was opened at 10.00am by the Mayor of the Duinga Shire Council, Mr. Gary Howard. The Mayor welcomed and thanked participants for attending. The excellent response by participants was indicative of the level of interest in the issue of housing in Blackwater.

Mr. Ian Ogden, Chief Executive Officer of Duinga Shire Council outlined the agenda for the day. Whilst Council was pro-active in initiating the Forum, its role in the proceedings were that of facilitation. All participants are key stakeholders and everyone's contribution is valued. The key to the success of the day is frank and open communication. Engaging in meaningful dialogue will enable many questions to be answered.

### *Morning Session*

- Brief History of Blackwater and Statistical Analysis
- Round Table Identification – why are you here and what are your issues?

### *Afternoon Session*

- Synthesis of Information and Problem Solving. Participants randomly divided into 4 groups to synthesize the information disseminated in the morning session.
- Issues and Possibilities – group feedback
- Summary and close

## BACKGROUND AND AIM OF THE FORUM

The need for the Blackwater Housing Forum evolved as Council became increasingly aware of the intentions of the major industry groups to expand with rapid growth and development (some in the very near future). Such intensive development has not been seen in the town since the early days of the Blackwater's development. This growth and the corresponding opportunities and constraints need to be well managed to achieve the best outcomes for all stakeholders and the community as a whole.

The current pressure on the Blackwater housing market, both in terms of rental accommodation and housing available for purchase is under considerable stress.

The situation is complicated by the high numbers of vacant houses still evident in the town. The market price has been rapidly escalating over the past few months.

Indications from the mining industry suggest there will be demand for short to medium term accommodation in Blackwater. Council has been approached by a number of parties interested in substantial development in expanding the number of temporary accommodation dwelling units in the town. High levels of interest have also been shown in sites suitable for Motel Developments and sales of unoccupied land. Council is lead to believe the current market cannot cope with the intimated development.

In order for Council to position itself well in relation to future Town Planning and compliance issues, and to enable the community to align social and economic prerogatives with sustainable outcomes a precise snapshot of the issues was paramount. The "small seed of an idea" a few months back, has developed into today's larger than anticipated Forum.

The Forum was intended as a “whole of community” information sharing exercise so that all key players are informed of the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead for Blackwater and the Shire.

Duaringa Shire Council is seeking to:

- engage with industry and the community to determine the gaps
- identify what Council can do to facilitate growth
- be informed for future planning, and
- discuss perceived constraints from Councils perspective.

Council is interested in Blackwater accommodation needs in the

- Short-term (1-2 years)
- Medium-term (3-8 years)
- Long-term (8 years and beyond)

Issues which need to be addressed from a Council perspective include:

- Planning scheme
- Development of social and community infrastructure
- Sound management and community development principles, and
- Sustainability principles.

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Councils Director of Customer and Community Services, Andrew Reid, Consultant of Planning and Environment, Warren Bolton and CEO, Ian Ogden set the scene as to how Blackwater evolved and how the area is documented statistically for the future. (See Appendix A).

Established in 1881, Duaringa Shire covers an area of 18,102 square kilometres. The Shire boasts a population of 6,640 people and incorporates five main communities of Duaringa, Dingo, Bauhinia, Bluff and Blackwater. The Shire shares common boundaries with the Broomsound, Livingstone, Banana, Taroom, Fitzroy, Bauhinia and Emerald Shires as well as the local government of Woorabinda.



The Tropic of Capricorn dissects the Shire and, accordingly, the climate is sub-tropical and sub-humid. During summer months, temperatures range between 15<sup>0</sup>C and 35<sup>0</sup>C and winter temperatures range from 6<sup>0</sup> C to 25<sup>0</sup> C.

The economic prosperity of the region was triggered by the advent of the Fitzroy Basin Brigalow Development Scheme- a Federal Government project instigated in 1962 to clear and develop 4.5 million hectares of previously unproductive land in Central Queensland.

Another economic development success story within the Shire is the coal industry. The town of Blackwater has positioned itself as the Coal Capital of Queensland. It's the dormitory town for six coal mines. The coal produced in the Shire makes a considerable contribution to Australia's mineral export earnings.

A range of statistics was presented in relation to population projections, age profiles, building investments and approvals.

The validity and ambiguity of the statistics is questionable as they contradict, in some circumstances, the reality of what is currently being experienced in Blackwater.

The statistics reveal a population decline, in line with a productivity decline in the area. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this is a myth.

The transient population must be considered in relation to the impact on the community. A transient population is more demanding on local infrastructure and community services than a permanent population. Regardless of the length of time people are residing in the Shire, they must be valued and acknowledged as an integral part of our community. There needs to be a contribution and reinvestment back into the community whether it is in financial or social terms.

Blackwater's community is developing at a deeper level. For many people the Community is "alive" with a renewed sense of prosperity and positivity. Involvement in social networks is increasing. Home ownership has contributed significantly to community permanence. Historically Blackwater had very few home owners but this has changed to the current situation where the majority of the housing stock is privately owned. It is interesting to note neighbouring Shires similar in background to Duaringa Shire, have not all experienced the home ownership growth rate as in the Duaringa Shire.

Concurrently, Council is in the process of developing a new planning scheme which will address some of the major issues with the current scheme. The current planning scheme was adopted in 1990; hence fifteen years later it is not abreast with current trends. It was very rigid and regulatory and relied heavily on zones/zoning. It impacts on the scope of current development. For example, the manner in which camps is defined in the current scheme. Even though the scheme was prepared in 1990, where mining was the major industry, and camps were an integral part of the industry, it is interesting to note that the scheme did not make camps right of use. The scheme identified camps as a temporary measure that would have to be dealt with; these currently require an impact assessment. This is one issue to be addressed in the new planning scheme.

Council needs to be mindful of, plan for, and manage other issues such as: land tenure, single men's accommodation, existing camps, the Integrated Planning Act (IPA), other legislation, green field development, existing pressures, and to forecast the life and magnitude of development activity.

## **ROUND TABLE – PARTICIPANTS COMMENTS**

### ***Arthur Hunt***

- Project Officer at the Department of Communities
- Agrees that there are problems associated with the information found in many of the statistical projections which are published for this area.
- In fact, the latest projections two months ago indicate that the area will continue to decline over the next twenty years.
- These forecasts do not seem realistic.
- Population projections do not seem to support confidence in the coal industry and encourages Council to take action to get the data corrected/amended.
- The statistics, based on questionnaires prepared by Councils, are gathered by a forecasting unit and are sent to the Australia Bureau of Statistics.
- Councils can request a review of the data to update/amend this information.
- The Bowen Basin website is a resource which may provide more accurate forecasts, and includes demographic data including census data for Blackwater and Duaringa Shire as a whole.

- Was involved in helping the Gladstone area with their problems. The situation was a bit different as they had two councils and different industries involved. Here there is one shire and one industry involved. Council has taken the initiative in this instance by calling Forum.
- Rolleston will definitely impact on the Blackwater community and coal industry and 100km railway line and road construction will benefit the area.
- Predicts the tourism industry will grow as people move from Carnarvon to Blackwater.
- Future predictions indicate a big impact for tourism.

#### ***Dave Wise***

- Manager of the Blackwater Caravan Park also has been a taxi driver in Blackwater for four and a half years.
- Has witnessed the base population of the town gradually reduce.
- Currently the Blackwater Caravan Park is totally full, mainly with a transient population. 85% of park residents are contractors.
- However there maybe 4-5 permanent residents.
- This has not always been the case. Twelve months ago there were very few in the park, however it has grown to the point currently where they can turn away 3 or 4 people each day who require accommodation.
- Even if the park was to double in size, the area would fill very easy.
- There is a new owner and there has been no mention of future plans for expansion or development.
- Space is extremely tight.

#### ***Brendan Waters***

- Is the BMA Project Manager for the new Blackwater Coal Preparation Plant project at Blackwater.
- Very interested in accommodation for the short-term for the next 18 months.
- Involved from pre-feasibility stage and now on execution stage and approval for the project –needs to look at accommodation and how to manage it – new camp??
- When the project was put together, it was a major project and the process was hard to get through. All the data was pretty well put together by the middle of last year and then it took time to get through the approvals process.
- The project is 50% Mitsubishi and Billiton.
- When the decision was made to go ahead in Blackwater, the accommodation situation was looked at. BMA made a conscious decision at that time that as there did not seem to be much development going on from mid-2004 between existing facilities and new facilities that the project should fit in with a pinch. This seemed a much better option than building a new camp.
- Outcome of temp workers in town - very little social unrest and incredibly few problems. .
- During the project approval stage and the commencement of the project, BMA has been watching the accommodation situation week by week and could see the pinch point back a month ago.
- There is accommodation becoming available very shortly so this will work in well.
- **Estimate the influx of 400 people will peak in the middle of next year.** (This number may actually be in the low 300s but historically the number exceeds the anticipated workforce).
- **Timeline expected: from now to Christmas there will be approximately 70-80 people, increasing to 200 over 6 months, and peaking up to 300/400 at the middle of next year (2005).**



- Onsite vs. city site – As far as major projects are concerned, temporary accommodation is the best solution if it fits in with existing infrastructure and social networks, resulting in far less social unrest. It allows involvement in sporting clubs and the use of sporting facilities, access to services and encourages community interaction. Unfortunately, there is not always the opportunity to utilise existing infrastructure
- Projects historically did not think about impacts on community. Now this aspect is always looked at and considered prior to projects being approved i.e. impact, risks, how many people, social responsibility, etc.
- Totally stand alone project, 3-4 permanent employees on the project, the remainder all represent transient population. Certainly some local contractors will be involved.

#### ***Kathy Williamson***

- From the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy
- Attending to offer advice to Council regarding the allocation of state land, native title issues associated with vacant.

#### ***Anthony White***

- From the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy
- Is involved with other mining towns that are currently holding similar forums.
- Seems to be more temporary accommodation which is the most immediate issue being discussed today, although DNRM&E thought that Council would be looking at long-term subdivisions not short-term accommodation.

#### ***Bill Jackson***

- From Blackwater Real Estate.
- Has been in Blackwater for ten years.
- Remembers that it was not too long ago that all the Mines owned the houses which they have now sold to staff.
- Curragh is the only Mine which still owns accommodation. They have 140 in the rental market and own 400. However Curragh is starting to take these houses back for their own workforce.
- Local investors have increased purchasing houses which now means there are approximately 190 rentals in town.
- There has been an obvious phenomenal growth over recent periods in the value of land and houses.
- Demand is high for accommodation however there is nowhere to put people.
- Approximately 30-40 blocks of land sold in the last month.
- Builders in town are not available or not able to keep up with demand.
- Builders and technology is not available in the area and this is holding up construction.
- Finding out that people want to build and possibly have to wait six months.

#### ***Mark Hill***

- BMA Mine Manager.
- Was in the Brisbane BMA office last week for a business strategic plan review.
- Blackwater diversified town but predominantly coal-based.
- There is unprecedented growth in coal industry; currently China and India are anticipated to expand exponentially in the near future.
- BMA sees enormous potential in the future of coal for this region.
- Future Plans include expanding the Hay Point facility, expanding production in both Goonyella and Blackwater.
- BMA believes that the future of these townships is very strong and although production may not cease, there will be bumps along the way.

- Limiting factor to expansion and production will be resources i.e. how to get the coal out.
- Labour makes up 40% of project costs and in any industry, technology can and will be introduced to make more efficient use of labour i.e. to reduce costs and increase productivity.
- The economic reality from a Blackwater point of view is that there may be no reduction in labour unless the market goes pear-shaped.
- This may result in a large number of temporary people being employed on the permanent books and they will need accommodation.

### ***John Duggan***

- From the Bottletree Motel and Caravan Park.
- Cannot expand the motel side of the operations and there is difficulty in expanding the van side as areas need to be put aside to cater for tourists.
- Whilst there is a strong need for semi-permanent accommodation, caravan parks are primarily there to cater for caravans and mobile homes.
- Is concerned that after the peak is over, Council will be in competition with free enterprise in town through its own proposed tourism operations.
- At the moment, the park is not completely full but with the usual winter influx of southern tourists coming in shortly, accommodation and space will not be available.

### ***Lynda Connell***

- Council's Community Development Officer.
- Blackwater does have an aged population and the community does have a sense of belonging. There will always be a segment of the community who do wish to reside in Blackwater.
- Real concerns are the social impacts on the community for both the short and long-term periods.
- There is already a struggle in attracting and retaining services and professionals in the community sector i.e. health, education, community welfare. Lack of available housing adds an additional stress, and this is complicated by housing standards and affordability.
- With the influx of people coming for employment and bringing families with them, schools will find they have increasing numbers to deal with, for example the number of teachers must also increase. Similarly with other services developing, they will be hindered by the availability of housing. A health service is to be established, employing 5 staff, but to date the service has not been able to secure housing. This jeopardises the service development.
- In the first instance, it is hard to attract professionals and, once attracted, the issue of housing them becomes enormous.
- Previous years worked with people who were accommodated in onsite camps and this resulted in a multitude of problems for the individual and the community.

### ***Kim Stokes***

- Operates the Anglicare Service in Blackwater.
- Has lived in Blackwater for the past 8 years.
- Anglicare has one house for crisis accommodation, 8 houses for medium-term and 8 houses for short-term accommodation which all have had 100% occupancy rates for an extended period.
- Some Anglicare houses accommodate new people to town.
- Some clients had rented privately, houses were sold, and in some instances tenants had been given 7-10 days to get out – Anglicare has been helping these people find intermediate accommodation.
- There are approximately 10 families looking for intermediate accommodation.
- Even Miners have been housed at different times as they and their families have been living out of their car as there is no other housing available.
- The Centrelink agency here in Blackwater has some 200 forms lodged per month (approx 50/wk).

- Job Network representatives are visiting Blackwater every two weeks i.e. long term unemployed here in town.
- It must also be realised that young people, the unemployed and low-income earners are providing services to miners also.
- House rentals have increased \$150-220 pw and these people cannot afford housing at this price and therefore are stuck in limbo.
- Of major concern is that there are no houses with affordable rent and these low-income earners cannot afford to buy accommodation for the long-term.
- Two side effects, the young people leave town and poor health/overcrowding in some homes is evident, which may lead to neighbourhood problems.
- The existing community services in Blackwater fulfil multiple functions as the timeframes between some visiting services is long and possibly their visits are not entirely effective. Looking after one issue is not a possibility as the gap between services must be addressed.
- It must be realised the result of the removal/sale of approximately 30 Housing Queensland (HQ) houses is that the money was not returned to the area i.e. HQ has no interest in rebuilding in the town to replace the housing.
- There is currently a 9-12 month waiting list for HQ accommodation in Blackwater.

### *Wendy Yardy*

- Is the Community Housing Resource Worker for the CQ area, working with community housing from Miriam Vale to Jericho and Alpha.
- Gladstone is a good example of what happened to a community in similar circumstances. Comalco came in and took up a great layer of the housing in the middle market and the effect flowed down. No longer could medium income earning people afford housing.
- The low income earners struggled.
- It is imperative to recognise that these are real issues and the flow on effects needs to be included in the pot when discussing housing issues.
- It is essential to keep an eye on what is happening in the housing industry.

### *John Heaps*

- Representing Curragh Queensland Mining.
- Curragh still owns all their accommodation of 400 houses/units i.e. approximately 1/5 of housing stock in Blackwater, and has no immediate plans to sell at this time.
- Currently Curragh has 230 employees.
- In the past few years, there was a huge pressure to remove assets on the balance sheet by disposing of 200 empty houses. Curragh retained the housing stock and found they had almost 200 empty houses, in addition to 185 which were rented out to employees and the community.
- Curragh stopped commercially renting houses in January 2004 to the general community and now only makes exceptions where the tenant is linked to Curragh in some way.
- Curragh has reduced the number of rented houses to 125.
- Some former tenants (companies) took steps to purchase accommodation and others have not.
- Do not have exact numbers as to what will be needed in next 12 months but it is estimated that **Curragh will require an additional 50 houses.**
- One major question for Curragh was whether to continue to rent these vacant houses to meet demand and ask tenants to vacate premises when housing is required by the Company; or alternately, risk community upset and turn people away in order to leave the house vacant until such time as it was required and face questions from the community. The aim for Curragh is not to re-let houses when they are vacated, so that they do not have to ask people to vacate the premises.
- Curragh probably turns away approximately four requests per month for rentals.

- Curragh has 46 vacant houses today. 18 are for recruitment currently being undertaking. The remainder are for stockpile.
- Still there will be an overflow and the biggest problem is temporary accommodation.
- It is foreseen that there will not be enough accommodation owned by Curragh to meet its own needs.
- **The construction phase will see approximately 230 people over the coming 18 months.**
- Blackwater is a very mature mining town and planners need think about planning and development as a mining town.
- Mines see extremely strong growth over next 4-5 years.
- Blackwater generates much income for State Government and would like to see them put some investment back in to the area.

### *Jim Wirth*

- Has been a resident of Blackwater since 1975.
- Has seen the town stagnated for a while in a period where long-term residents were very cautious.
- Is still not sure whether to build on a purchased vacant block.
- Also has some real estate to offload.
- Needs confidence to proceed with either, would require a more stable workforce to influence him to build, as building costs in Blackwater are a substantial amount.

### *Ian Ogden*

- A temporary workforce definitely affects services and impost on community and local government.
- Agrees that all statistics suffer from dated information and questionnaires may not be entirely accurate, depending on the agenda of those completing them.
- It is visible that people are putting down roots in the town.
- Blackwater has an economic profile of the 6<sup>th</sup> highest by postcode income earning community in the state.
- However this income is not evenly spread across the community.
- Blackwater is an emerging and maturing community with increased interest and involvement in arts and cultural activities, secondary industry, service industries, education industries etc and this gives confidence that we are more than a mono-purpose town.
- Council is preparing a particular block for sale by auction for interested parties to develop motel type accommodation and pre-approval going ahead now so as not to hold up the application and construction processes.
- There could be the opportunity for a 40-room development on this site.
- With just one new (BMA) project, there is an expected 8% growth in the population of Blackwater.
- 400 people in Mackay/Rockhampton can be absorbed easily without too much impact but this influx into Blackwater is significant.
- How do we capitalise on the short-term spike or, at very least, how do we gauge that the community is resilient enough, and that it is not draining on local government.
- A 10% increase in population means an upsurge in the need for infrastructure but does not mean a corresponding increase in revenue streams.
- Council has an interest in subdivision and there are market opportunities for high class housing in Blackwater.
- Council is in the process of exploring options to free up land which may be constrained by native title.
- There is endless opportunity for people to come in to Blackwater for employment but no accommodation available.

- Great to hear that Mining companies have such a positive outlook for the industry as a whole and especially in the Duinga Shire and Blackwater area.
- The world would be looking at a generation plus before new fuels could replace our current dependence on carbon- based and fossil fuels.
- Miners Park is an area being considered by Council and the Mining Industry to compliment the Shire's budding tourism industry and additional accommodation areas catering for overnight stays may also be required for tourists once this area is underway.
- The Blackwater Showground area may also be developed for overnight stay usage.
- The Bedford Weir recreation reserve is being developed and it is hoped a number of overflow tourists will be encouraged to be diverted there to make use of the facilities proposed.
- However there are a number of complexities with these proposals to discuss and micro-markets to be considered.
- With the BMA and Curragh projects proceeding, the community is looking at having **600 additional people looking for accommodation at same time.**
- Blackwater does have depth and diversification and it is obvious that the major concern here today is accommodation in the short-term
- However we also have to look at the future and, although tenure is linked to Mines, more consideration needs to be given to the long-term.
- Blackwater town is a difficult place to manage as the assets are 30 years old. These assets were contributed assets and not to any high standard or permanence. The current generation has inherited an infrastructure with an enormous replacement value and spiralling costs i.e. water has quadrupled in price in last 5-6 years. Now Council budgets somewhere in vicinity of \$650,000 to buy water and \$2m to provide water to Blackwater/Bluff.
- Council will be exploring revenue opportunities in this town to provide civic facilities and permanence but, of course, to do that the community needs revenue streams. Temporary accommodation does not provide anything for Council in terms of servicing those people.
- Private investors have profit in mind and their investment in the town may not result in helping those in the low-income bracket and Council has too limited resources to be responsive.



### ***Frank Perry***

- Is an Officer of the Department of Housing in Rockhampton and covers the region from Miriam Vale to Marlborough and Yeppoon to Alpha.
- The Department is responsible for the provision of safe, secure, affordable and appropriate accommodation to those who qualify certain criteria.
- There is always a certain number of people renting Department accommodation and a number on the waiting list which the Department works through.
- There are 4 empty houses in Blackwater.
- Indications show that waiting lists in the area are low which indicates to the Department that more houses are not required.
- There are other locations where the waiting lists are longer.
- Private enterprise needs to look at low-cost housing themselves and not depend on State Government.

### ***Dom Carroll***

- Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Director of Corporate Services at the Duinga Shire Council.
- Has been based in Duinga for the past six and a half years.

- Recently a business person in Blackwater, in discussion, remarked that the cost of building a house in Blackwater was almost \$200,000 and, given those costs, why bother to invest with so much uncertainty in the town – it was ‘too much trouble’.
- The trouble is some Blackwater residents have the mindset that, even in Blackwater in these times, building and investment in the town is too much of a risk.
- Need for community to be presented with very accurate predictions of the future.
- Is very happy to hear predictions of the prosperity of the coal industry and heard also heard similar reports about Chinese economy.
- Advises that the development of a private enterprise on Blackdown Tableland Road primarily for tourists is another indication of the strength of a second industry coming into the Shire i.e. tourism.
- Agrees that input from State Government is needed. So much of State and Commonwealth Government wealth is derived from this area.

### *Kelly Murphy*

- Yarrabee Coal Company representative.
- Last year, Yarrabee increased its production and production is still looking to be up.
- Have 15 commercial properties with Blackwater Real Estate have been 100% filled for some time.
- Yarrabee Coal supplies housing for its own management staff only.
- **Yarrabee is looking at self-contained units for medium temporary accommodation for single engineers and professional staff who don’t require a large four bedroom house.** At present the Company provides rental assistance for those people. Eg a single graduate has been accommodated of late in Curragh quarters but he will have to move soon but for a single guy with no family he does not need house but it may be that a family may have to be evicted to allow him accommodation.
- One issue is accommodation is required for single visitors and Company Directors visiting the site that may need overnight accommodation. The Company tries to arrange flights in and out on the same day to alleviate this situation.
- It is not viable for Yarrabee to build its own units.

### *Anne-Marie Mills*

- Cook Resource Mining.
- Position is responsible for handling accommodation.
- Currently Cook has 75 employees. More than half own their own houses or have made other arrangements to find accommodation.
- Cook Resources relies heavily on Curragh for housing assistance.
- Attending the Forum to determine what other accommodation can be sourced once Curragh takes back its accommodation.
- Cook Resources was recently purchased by Xstrata and the outlook of the Mine is very positive for the future.

### *Alyson Brady*

- Representing Cook Resource Mining.
- Need to think seriously about future needs in the town not just short-term fixes.

### *Alice Horswood*

- Has lived in Blackwater since 1971.
- Is a Councillor, Duaringa Shire Council.
- Has seen Blackwater come the big circle from bush to large town in that time.

- Would like to see future for grandchildren through accommodation and jobs.
- Does not agree with Mine employees living elsewhere and flying in and out for work.
- Believes in supporting the community by living in the town or surrounding areas.

***Key Cracknell***

- Is a Councillor, Duinga Shire Council.
- In attendance to determine accommodation requirements for the future and determine the future of the town.

***Gary Howard***

- Has lived in Blackwater since 1975 and has worked in the coal industry since that time.
- Is currently Mayor of Duinga Shire.
- Wants to see positive growth and has a strong belief in Blackwater.
- Notes that CHR rent houses and will depend on Curragh.

***Mark Hill***

- BMA Mine Manager.
- BMA owns a handful of houses and rents a handful from Housing Commission on lease.
- BMA is earmarked for construction of new plant and additional future recruitment.
- Wage employees look after their own housing requirements.
- Supply housing for managers and support staff only.
- Hard to attract staff due to the standard of housing.
- Times have changed and people require different types of accommodation. Most housing stock in Blackwater is 35 years old. This is a major issue for BMA at the moment.
- BMA has capital available for houses if needed.
- Another issue is that BMA has 1/3 workforce on contracted hours and accommodation needs to cater for this.
- Personal opinion – some people prefer to live in one area and travel to work in another. The Blackwater community needs to understand and accept this as a fact of life.
- To combat this Blackwater needs to be made as attractive as possible to entice people to move their families here. .

***Jacqui Kennedy***

- Is a small business owner located in Blackwater employing 6 staff members.
- Attending the Forum due to worry that Blackwater may become another Moranbah with house rentals soaring to \$130 to \$410 per week.
- Currently noticing people from out of town buying houses without looking at them and raising both the price of housing sales and rentals.
- Is terrified that local non-mine employees will not be able to compete with Mine wages, thus they will not be able to afford to live in Blackwater as they cannot afford to rent homes let alone buy.
- Agrees that there is greater need for more low cost/medium term housing.

***Myke Cavanagh***

- From AUSCO Building Systems.
- Current facility is located at the Bottletree Caravan Park.
- AUSCO operates mainly in the transportable accommodation market.
- Housing and accommodation is currently a very big growth area not only in this area.

***Garth Schoemer***

- From Barclay Mowlem.
- Barclay Mowlem is building the coal plant for BMA.
- **Requires accommodation for approximately 320 workers.**
- Earthworks will be completed onsite and the design will be carried out in Brisbane.
- Timeline – **approximately 60 workers in October 2004 and up to 320 in February for the 8 months till end of the project.**
- Advises that the company will advertise locally for positions and there may be opportunities for local people to drive buses, office staff, etc.
- There will be a large workforce for a long period of time.
- Workers will complete 10 hour days.
- Workers will impose on local community for sporting facilities, other services etc.
- The company is looking forward to being here for one year from this October.

#### ***Barry O'Connor***

- From AUSCO Building Systems.
- Attending to determine what the real needs are for the region to assist in putting plans in place to assist Blackwater.
- AUSCO have been in Blackwater for 3 years and are certainly looking at the medium to long-term future.

#### ***Henry Milanovic***

- General Manager of AUSCO Building Systems.
- In terms of AUSCO's future in Blackwater, the short-term seems high, the medium-term good, but the long-term still cannot be judged.
- One thing in Blackwater's favour is that the leases and mines around Blackwater are of high value.
- The degree of AUSCO's investment in infrastructure will be dependent on situations arising at the time.

#### ***Peter Cope***

- Has lived in Blackwater since 1974.
- Owns rental properties in town.
- Has noticed upturn in the building industry.
- Has found that as a builder he cannot get plans prepared etc, which makes it hard to get ahead and build.

#### ***Jennie Cope***

- Wife of Mr. Peter Cope.
- Suggests that boarding houses in Blackwater be looked at when preparing new town plan.

#### ***Vince Lucas***

- Has been a resident of Blackwater for 25 years.
- Is concerned for the future of the town of Blackwater and the Shire as a whole.
- Stated that Blackwater has been through these cycles in the past.
- Advised that the quoted statistics retards confidence and investment. Need to get the accurate information out to the public.
- Businessmen and companies will make investment decisions based on the information that the media puts out. The data collected for these statistics needs to be reassessed before more damage is caused. New business and industry will not invest when they see these false predictions. The banks have left the town maybe as a result of these incorrect predictions.

- Rent and value for dollar and deposit rates on house purchases (in comparison to say Rockhampton) are too high in Blackwater to encourage investment.
- Advised that the type of accommodation required needs to be defined before anything can be done i.e. are we talking motel accommodation or permanent accommodation.
- Would like to see achieved a collaborative direction to approach the State Government, with the assistance of parliamentary members, to deal with these issues.
- Agreed with Mark Hill that some people will always travel to work and it is up to us to make Blackwater inviting for them to be here and stay here.

***Lloyd McDonald***

- Is in the process of buying the Blackwater Town Centre Shopping Complex.
- Has attended to hear about the future of Blackwater for the long-term.

***Dianne Rogers***

- BMA Human Resources Secretary/ Housing Officer
- BMA manages a housing stock of approximately 140 houses, 18 of which are presently vacant and BMA has specific plans for their use. Some have been put aside for the upcoming project and these are starting to be occupied.
- There are other projects which will also need housing soon.

***Bruce Kennedy***

- BMA Property Manager
- Agrees that houses are in short supply within the town.
- Advises that BMA encourages home ownership by its employees as this encourages people to assimilate into the town and make an investment.
- In the past, with the downturns in production and given high labour costs, the course of action taken was when houses were vacated they were disposed of.
- This was only a short-term view.
- BMA has tried to lessen this trend by supporting and encouraging home ownership.
- It is also a fact that there will always be a minority of people who will prefer to stay elsewhere and travel to work – this cannot be helped unless families are enticed to and integrated in the town.

***Warren Bolton***

- An appendage to today's discussions is the administrative problems which arise when older houses are sold.

**SYNTHESIS OF INFORMATION AND PROBLEM SOLVING**

Participants were randomly selected to form four groups and assigned the task of brainstorming the issues and possibilities in relation to Blackwater's current situation discussed in the morning session.

The information from each of the four work groups was then presented back to the larger group.



ISSUES	POSSIBILITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short/medium term accommodation – 0-2 years</li> <li>• Location of short-term accommodation</li> <li>• Long-term affordable housing for low income workers</li> <li>• Need more family-style long-term houses for permanent employees</li> <li>• Planning issues to be addressed – suitable land to be allocated</li> <li>• Cost structures associated with building</li> <li>• Financial costs associated with building</li> <li>• Accessible public land (council)</li> <li>• Availability of builders (poor quality)</li> <li>• Availability and accessibility of land with infrastructure connected (needs to be accelerated)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not on highway</li> <li>• Separate pockets of land/camps</li> <li>• Request Housing Queensland to retain (not sell existing stock)</li> <li>• Representation to local Politicians by community groups and Council</li> <li>• Entrepreneurs to require and manage and increase housing stock</li> <li>• Not-for-profit organisations to go into partnership with companies/entrepreneurs</li> <li>• Use town reserves</li> <li>• Encourage more apprenticeships/training</li> </ul>

ISSUES	POSSIBILITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short-term (minimum standard housing)</li> <li>• Medium-term (higher standard housing)</li> <li>• Destabilised Housing market</li> <li>• Long-term survival of Blackwater (retirement – living in Blackwater)</li> <li>• Future growth of Blackwater</li> <li>• Native Title</li> <li>• Housing costs</li> <li>• Permanency of tenure in Mining Companies – Contractors</li> <li>• Need for unit development</li> <li>• 12 hour shifts – destroy family and community life</li> <li>• affordable homes</li> <li>• concern for private investors</li> <li>• How many houses are needed in Blackwater?</li> <li>• How many vacant blocks of land in Blackwater?</li> <li>• No builders</li> <li>• Mines not training tradesmen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportable</li> <li>• Planning with existing resources</li> <li>• Other industries in area and mix of housing</li> <li>• Subdivision of town reserve by LG</li> <li>• Pre-Fab housing</li> <li>• Permanency – long-term jobs for life</li> <li>• Shorter shifts</li> <li>• Better communication &amp; education</li> <li>• DNR to auction</li> <li>• Current Affairs</li> <li>• Mines</li> </ul>

ISSUES	POSSIBILITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No incentives to attract builders &amp; tradesmen</li> <li>• Not enough housing</li> <li>• Need to specify what housing is</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council could work together with DNRME to develop an area of town reserve that doesn't have native title <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ i.e. village type</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<p>required i.e. short-term contractors, overnight, mid to long term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of motel accommodation and prices of rooms – people not getting what they pay for</li> <li>• Houses are older stock and not maintained to the standard they should be</li> <li>• Houses available do not cater for our lifestyle</li> <li>• Splitting of families changes the family unit dynamics i.e. mum and children live on the coast</li> <li>• Negative mindset with the transitional and temporary</li> <li>• Lack of confidence – mindset</li> <li>• Under sell the positives of the town</li> <li>• Land not readily available</li> <li>• Insufficient housing to house builders</li> <li>• Due to lack of facilities i.e. dentists people not prepared to settle in town</li> </ul>	<p>accommodation/single professionals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ tender system for companies like AUSCO with lease arrangements (\$30,000 2 bdrm + \$1000 installation)</li> <li>○ this would take away the no builders issue or provide accommodation for the builders</li> <li>○ attract a spec-builder</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A more coordinated approach to all housing including all stakeholders – form a committee to oversee the situation</li> <li>• Promote the positives of the community by looking at what we have i.e. the ‘safety’ of the town, facilities which are available, location to areas, great community values, not competing for things the town doesn’t do so well in.</li> <li>• See what Moranbah’s incentives are</li> <li>• Council ensures that motels keep up hygiene/cleanliness standards</li> <li>• Confidence will be increased with union building units and selling individual units</li> <li>• Well positioned ‘camp’ with recreational facilities alleviates some of the social impacts</li> </ul>
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ISSUES	POSSIBILITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Construction workforce</li> <li>○ Quality</li> <li>○ Type (standard does not exist)</li> <li>○ Age of existing (too old)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Accommodation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Short-term (do not bring families)</li> <li>○ Medium term</li> <li>○ Cost – low/self contained</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Choices to stay at point of origin</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Social aftermath of construction phase</li> <li>• Tenure of employment affects family movement decisions</li> <li>• Recruitment</li> <li>• Confidence to invest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private investors guaranteed by Mines</li> <li>• Coordinated approach to state and federal governments to return on the investment Blackwater provides to the economy eg housing government employees</li> <li>• Pressures on social amenity</li> <li>• Project hours (shifts) may impact – not as strong as perceived</li> </ul>

It was stated that there were 117 vacant houses found in Blackwater – WHY?? It was calculated out as follows:-

- 46 Set aside for expected mine usage
- 30 Set aside for expected mine usage
- 5 Set aside for housing commission
- 36 in between owners, between tenures, contractors lease for next job etc

## **CONCLUSION**

Mr. Ian Ogden thanked all participants for their commitment in the proceedings, the active participation added value to the depth of dialogue. The information sharing has provided a concrete foundation for all stakeholders in addressing the issues emerging with the major industry developments in Blackwater. The opportunity to receive first hand factual information will assist all stakeholders with their strategic planning, and many networks/communication links were developed through out the day.

The day generated great interest and ideas for Council to take on board and digest, and likewise for the other stakeholders. A report from the day's proceedings will be compiled by Council and circulated to all invitees in the near future.

Mr Ogden thanked facilitators and participants for their time.

The Mayor endorsed the Chief Executive Officer's words and thanked everyone for attending.

The Forum was officially closed by CEO Ian Ogden and Mayor Gary Howard at 3.20pm.