

## **Noosa Oyster Ecosystem Restoration Project SHELLABRATION September 7, 2022**

### **Keynote address by Noosa Council Deputy Mayor, Frank Wilke**

Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners.

I've been asked to speak on why Noosa council supports this project.

This project is about caring for country.

Noosa Council has consistently supported the Oyster Reef Restoration initiative because we embrace the obligation and the opportunity, *as contemporary custodians*, to protect, restore and enhance this community's land and water-based ecosystems, within legal reach of our care and responsibility.

Those of you here today understand that, just as forests clean the air and provide habitat for land based animals, oyster reefs clarify the water and provide habitat for marine creatures, improving water quality and enriching marine biodiversity.

You appreciate that, once factually informed of the impacts of human activity on our community's natural assets, doing nothing about it is not an option.

The report by Dr Ruth Thurstan of the University of Queensland showed oyster reefs were once abundant throughout the Noosa River system as were vastly greater numbers of fish.

The Seagrass Survey indicated that, in our lifetime between 1987 to 2020, the decline in Noosa River's seagrass has been up to 100 percent in some areas.

Noosa council is proud to support evidence and science-backed initiatives like this one, that aim to restore and leave our natural assets in a better shape for future generations.

And partnerships are the best way to tackle complex and ambitious projects requiring high-level expertise, permits for something that's never been done before and community education programs.

This oyster reef restoration project is backed by arguably *the* most extensive partnership involving the most contributors ever seen in Noosa Shire.

Noosa council has consistently aimed to play its part in working with three levels of government, the world's leading environmental organisation The Nature Conservancy, the traditional owners, the Thomas Foundation and numerous community, businesses and Non-Government Organisations to improve the health, resilience and biodiversity of the Noosa River.

I'd like to acknowledge some of the groups represented here today, the Kabi Kabi, The Nature Conservancy, Noosa Shire Council, Australian Marine Conservation Society, Noosa Parks Association, Sunshine Coast Council, Maritime Safety Qld, Noosa Environmental Education Hub, Noosa Integrated Catchment Association, Noosa Community Biosphere Association, Noosa Biosphere Reserve Foundation, Tourism Noosa, Resource Recovery Australia, Noosa Landcare, Makepeace Island, Ozfish and last, but not definitely least, our partners in the Department of Environment and Science (QLD)

The great naturalist, Sir David Attenborough has consistently urged communities and all levels of government to do everything in their power to address the decline in our life-sustaining ecosystems and biodiversity.

The Federal Government granted \$20 million to the Nature Conservancy to help restore oyster reefs around Australia, *because they understand* these projects strengthen communities and economies while protecting biodiversity.

Noosa is one of at least 13 coastal communities – from south-east Queensland right around Australia's coastline to Perth in Western Australia where the TNC is doing such work.

The Nature Conservancy have the stated aim of rebuilding 60 reefs across southern Australia. 11 projects have been reported to be completed, or nearly completed so far.

It's a privilege to be part of something greater than ourselves, that has real potential to set the Noosa River and Australia on a course towards greater future aquatic health.

It's been a long road to get to this point and that is certainly worth a SHELLEBRATION, and we've all still got a way to go.

As David Attenborough said "We are at a unique stage in our history. Never before have we had *such an awareness of what we are doing to the planet*, and never before have *we had the power to do something about that. Surely we all have a responsibility*"

It's a privilege to stand with each and every one of you today- people who feel the responsibility we have for our natural assets, and who are prepared to take informed action to care for them.