

Councillors urged to take responsibility for Noosa River

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IN THE last months of the Playford Noosa Council, planning staff and the Noosa River community jury have delivered a political challenge to the councillors about to contest the March 19 election.

And there is an extra sting in the pending decision to go before Monday's general committee meeting - the planning staff recommendation for Noosa Council to "agree in principle" to the council taking on the responsibility of managing anchoring, mooring, commercial uses and jetty leases for the Noosa River.

The staff advice to replace the state-based water control would initially set the council back \$265,000 in the first year and \$165,000 a year after that.

The initial costs include \$30,000 to cover the removal of derelict houseboats.

Also to be considered is the wisdom of endorsing, in principle, the council's river control takeover, just prior to a new council taking office. The shire's second community jury was asked by the council to consider two questions:

- How can we manage the Noosa River better?
- What role should the council play and what resources should the council apply?

But after five meetings last year, the 24-member jury could not reach a unanimous decision on this control bid, with jurors split 18 for the council takeover of the river and six against.

The jury members in favour of council river control believed the State Government had failed to do a good management job and the council would do better, with costs offset by revenue.

The six jurors against the move said the management role would be too big for the council, a possible shortfall in revenue from river charges could lead to higher rates, and there was significant risk involved.

Now councillors must also consider their staff's call to write to the Department of Transport and Main Roads and Department of Natural Resources advising it of the jury's recommendation for Noosa Council to manage on-river and foreshore activities and seeking their support to establish an acceptable process for both parties to transfer management responsibilities for the Noosa River to council.

The council is also being asked to agree in principle to the remaining 12 jury recommendations, which were unanimous.

These include a recommendation to the council to "review, update and implement the Noosa River Plan in new framework and have it ratified with a formal status". If accepted, at next Thursday's ordinary meeting, the 12 actions will be referred to a council workshop "to consider the best legislative options, how they may be implemented and how they may be funded through a user-pay system".