

**Tidy Towns 2007
Assessor Evaluation Report**



Overall Town Entry

Town	Dorrigo
Population Category	B
Date of Assessment	18 September 2007
Local Contact Name	Ian Judd
Assessor	Chris Jeffreys

Award Criteria		Assessor	Panellist Score	Final Score
Beautification/General Appearance				
Community Awareness				
Community Participation				
Environmental Initiatives	Waste			
	Natural Heritage			
	Water Management			
Environmental Initiatives Sub Total				
Management of Volunteer Activities				
TOTAL SCORES				

Tidy Towns 2007
Overall Town Entry Score Sheets

BEAUTIFICATION/ GENERAL APPEARANCE (25%)

How does the town present itself to the wider community?

Approaches to towns including signs and features											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
<p>At all four entries to Dorrigo on the Waterfall Way north west of Coffs Harbour there is a sign to greet you that says 'Welcome to Dorrigo – Tidy Town, population 1192, altitude 762 metres and a list of previously won Tidy Town awards that have previously been won. Once you arrive in the township of Dorrigo you are greeted with an iconic war memorial that has a statue of a soldier standing tall in the middle of the cross roads. There is a general cleanliness and sense of belonging when you arrive in Dorrigo. The landscape is amazingly green with rolling hills in the background. The main streets a clean and well presented, there are a variety of small businesses who all present their shop fronts well and a heritage hotel on the corner of the crossroad intersection that has recently been restored. The parks are well maintained, there are nearby waterfalls in almost all directions, an incredible amount of well established trees and a variety visual features for the eyes to behold. Dorrigo is definitely a 'green jewel in a sea of brown'.</p>											
Business, retail and industrial areas (where relevant) including adequacy and servicing of litter bins											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
<p>The business and retail area of Dorrigo is very well presented. The commercial area has a very neat overall appearance. The local Chamber of Commerce are very proactive in working towards establishing standards of excellence and maintaining a high standard for the class of businesses that are in the township. There is not a lot of industry in Dorrigo as it is prominently a rural area; with the retail area being well presented. There is a range of eating places, a bakery, computer store, and other small businesses as well as a supermarket. There are a number of small street litter bins that are attached to poles within the main streets to encourage people to dispose correctly.</p>											
Parks, public gardens, toilet facilities and sporting areas etc											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A

The parks and gardens of Dorrigo are well maintained as a combined effort by the local garden club and council. There are a number of public facilities within the township that have been funded by the community that include, public seating, barbecues, and shelters. The local community have a strong commitment to the enhancement of their public spaces and facilities with garden and community club volunteers assuming responsibility for the planting and beautification of many of the local parks, gardens and picnic areas. Many of the facilities such as seating, barbecues and shade covers have been provided by funds raised by the community. There is a close relationship between Bellingen Shire Council and Dorrigo community who work closely together for the beautification and maintenance of public facilities. A team of outdoor workers met with us as shared morning tea on the day of assessment. During this time it was apparent that a relationship existed between some the TT committee and the workers from council.

General presentation of homes and gardens

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
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The homes and gardens that surround the township of Dorrigo are well presented and show a level of pride. Residential street areas were well presented and litter free. Some of the homesteads are heritage listed which links with the historical preservation of the town, with many of these homes having been restored with the assistance of grants from council that match 50% of the restoration costs for homes and sites that have been identified and registered.

There is a variety of housing in Dorrigo from old country cottages, heritage listed residences, homes that have been built over the past few decades, a new housing estate that is still being developed and farm houses most of which were well presented. The older country cottages that still stand adding character to the area.

Streets including footpaths and verges

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
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The garden club are responsible for most of the public gardens that are in Dorrigo with the members freely giving their time to plant and maintain the many gardens in the open spaces and verges within the township. The garden club consists of a passionate group of lovely people whose average age is 70 years who on a regular basis hold working bees site by site around the town to maintain and plant the many gardens in the township contributing many valuable hours towards the beautification of the township.

Other

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
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There is a high level of community participation that goes towards the beautification and overall presentation of Dorrigo. 100's of volunteer hours are given every month either, mowing, planting, weeding, clearing, constructing or welcoming people to the visitors centre that all add to the presentation of the village township of Dorrigo.

TOTAL SCORE

Additional Comments

There is an obvious presence of community pride in the township of Dorrigo. I heard stories from people who have relocated to the area for a 12 month employment stint and then to stayed, visited the area, bought some land while on holidays then returned to live long term

COMMUNITY AWARENESS (10%)

Is the wider community aware of the activities that the groups undertakes?

Effective use of local and/or regional media											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
<p>The local paper which is called the Don Dorrigo regularly publishes stories about the activities undertaken by local community groups. The morning after my arrival whilst at the newsagent, I couldn't miss a front page story about Tidy Towns and the assessor coming to town.</p> <p>There are local radio stations that present stories of interest as a part of local news and information and matters of greater significance would be covered by the regional NBN TV.</p>											
Use of local/community newsletters											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
<p>There are a variety of community newsletters that are distributed in the township, including a school newsletter that contains community news. Local businesses are happy to promote community activities by placing notices in their window or on notice boards.</p> <p>The Visitors Centre, Community Centre and Museum all display community notices</p> <p>The Dorrigo Chamber of Commerce recently developed a local web site to promote Dorrigo { HYPERLINK "http://www.dorrigo.com" } The site is live and was one that I visited prior to coming to the area in my quest for local information and accommodation prior to assessment. The chamber has also developed a brochure and booklet to promote Dorrigo that is distributed regionally.</p>											
Local competitions and promotions											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
<p>There is an annual Christmas lights and garden competition held throughout Dorrigo with the participation rate increasing each year. Both of these competitions stimulate a sense of community pride. A number of promotions are held throughout the year that include fund raising efforts to send local student or sporting teams to compete in other areas. An annual show is held in the Dorrigo Show Ground, Blue Grass Festival and regular country market that are all a form of local promotion that stimulates interest and raises the profile of Dorrigo throughout the northern rivers region and NSW.</p>											
Support through local council											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A

Bellingen Shire Council offers a high level of support to the community of Dorrigo who have a close working relationship. The Bellingen Shire Council has three townships within their LGA with many locals stating that without Dorrigo, Bellingen would not exist (tongue in cheek). Council's mission statement is 'To enhance our community's lifestyle and protect our unique environment through effective leadership, community involvement and commitment to service.' This philosophy on this statement is put into action in Dorrigo where the close relationship between council and the Dorrigo community has been demonstrated by both councillors and staff. During the time I spent at Dorrigo I had the pleasure of meeting one of the councillors, the mayor, GM and one two of the divisional managers who all took time out of their busy days to meet with me and the TT committee.

Other

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
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There is a high level of awareness that exists within Dorrigo of the efforts undertaken within the community coupled with a great sense of community pride. The actual level of community awareness of specific TT activities is hard to measure given the crossover in roles and participation on other committees by some of the members. One of the benefits of this close community is that it easy to raise awareness or spread the news of activities that are coming up.

TOTAL SCORE

Additional Comments

The obvious level of social capital and community pride that exists within Dorrigo engenders a high level of awareness and participation in all community activities by default. The existence of 120 committees and community groups within a township of 1200 people is evidence of this.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION (20%)

What is the involvement of each of the following:

Tidy Towns or coordinating group											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
<p>The TT coordinating group currently consists of 16 active members from a variety of backgrounds and professions. It is obvious when meeting this group of people around a table over lunch that they have a positive working and friendly relationship with one another that goes across generations.</p> <p>This positive interaction facilitates positive outcomes for the community. The TT committee work very closely with the Chamber of Commerce and the local council to achieve positive community benefits</p>											
Other Community groups											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
<p>As previously mentioned there are 123 community groups and committees that exist in Dorrigo with some members sitting within more than one group. All of these groups exist to serve the people of Dorrigo, whether it be the local footy club, scouts, hospital auxiliary, school P&C, lions, rotary, garden club or chamber of commerce to name a few. This astounding level of community participation means that not only the people of Dorrigo, but the broader community and visitors reap the benefit of their tireless efforts.</p>											
Schools including teachers, parents and students											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
<p>The schools within Dorrigo are seen as a vital part of the local community. Both the primary and secondary schools are proactively involved in environmental initiatives such as recycling and composting, A recent fund raising activity that was undertaken by the local community was able to provide a covered outdoor learning area for the public school. The high school parents, teachers and students are active within the community via participation in land care, clean up and other community activities.</p>											
Business and local industry commitment											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
<p>The commitment from local businesses to the community is also commendable with many of them providing support for TT and other community activities.</p> <p>The local baker provides the use of his bread ovens to bake food for large community events and fund raising activities. The local RSL provides their venue with others businesses pitch in how they can whether it be in sponsorship or in kind. Much of this support is organised through the Chamber of Commerce who are great supporters of TT and related activities.</p> <p>Commercial support for community activities is two fold in that if the community prospers, so does local business. The cross pollination of activities and alliances keeps the town economically sustainable.</p>											

Local council support											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
<p>Support from the local Council of Bellingen Shire to Dorrigo is admirable. There is a strong and positive relationship between the Dorrigo community and the council, including its outdoor staff who enjoy working in the town of Dorrigo. The outcome of which is that the whole of Dorrigo and its visitors reap the rewards of a well maintained and presented township.</p>											
Youth											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
<p>There are not a lot of young people beyond school age who live in Dorrigo as they move to the larger regions for work or to further their studies, though many of them return. The young people who do live in Dorrigo are provided with great facilities such as sporting grounds, skateboard ramp, community theatre and scouting groups. For those who like to fish I am told there is fish a plenty in the surrounding waters, particularly trout.</p> <p>Young people from Dorrigo provide assistance with some of the TT initiatives with a particular focus on environmental activities such as tree planting and clean up days.</p>											
Other											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
<p>Community participation is at a premium in Dorrigo, whilst there I saw a helipad not far from the skateboard ramp. The community raised funds for this helipad which is a dedicated and official evacuation, retrieval and rescue facility. The need for this facility was identified when Dorrigo became isolated as a result of a violent storm so the community went into action and successfully raised the funds to establish the helipad. It is also a site for the various helicopter services to transport anyone who is seriously ill out of Dorrigo. An extremely commendable action by a group of volunteers that will save the lives of many in the future.</p>											
TOTAL SCORE											

Additional Comments

Another amazing story of action that has been taken by the community of Dorrigo is a campaign that they ran to obtain a doctor for the community. The Chamber of Commerce got behind the initiative with the rest of the community volunteers and ran an advertising campaign across all forms of media offering accommodation and other benefits to encourage a doctor to come to Dorrigo. They were very proactive in their efforts and within 3 months Dorrigo had a doctor. I found this an amazing story.

It was also stated that given the amount of fundraising that occurs in Dorrigo on an annual basis and the money that is donated averages out to be almost \$1000 per annum per resident. (not sure if this includes children) an amazing commitment to the betterment of their local community.

ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES (30%)

This section measures the outcome of environmental projects which includes Waste, Natural Heritage and Water Management.

Waste

Local/State Government support											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
As stated throughout this report, Dorrigo is well supported by Bellingen Shire Council via its waste management plan and a recent upgrade of their local waste management facility that included the construction of a reuse facility. Free drop off facilities are also available for local residents and businesses. There has also been the recent implementation of a 3 bin kerbside collection system for waste, recycling and green waste which has been well accepted and appreciated by the community											
Education and awareness raising programs											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
Education and awareness raising programs have been offered by Bellingen Shire Council and Coffs Harbour in the form of media advertising and the distribution of educational literature											
Community Involvement											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
The community of Dorrigo has participated well in the recycling program provided by council with higher than average levels of recovery being reported for Dorrigo compared to the other two townships of Bellingen Shire. Another result that the residents of Dorrigo can be proud of.											
SCORE											

Additional Comments

The community of Dorrigo have embraced the implementation of the 3 bin kerbside collection service that has been implemented by council along with the improvements to the waste management centre and the construction of the re-use centre where many have already taken the opportunity to grab a bargain.

Natural Heritage

Local/State Government support											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
<p>The Dorrigo community receives both local and state government support for their environmental activities. There is a positive relationship with the local council where they receive in kind support as well as financial support in the form of Landcare funding and state government support from the local Catchment Management Authority. Funding has also been received from volunteer grants, National Trust, Telstra grants, and north coast water grants. Funding from these grant has enabled the volunteer groups to achieve greater results in their projects around the Dorrigo Plateau.</p>											
Community involvement											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
<p>The level of community involvement in environmental projects within Dorrigo is at a high level like the other community initiatives in the area. The commendable component of the environmental initiatives undertaken is that private landowners are also involved in the regeneration and establishment of wildlife corridors as well as preservation of riparian vegetation on the own land. Some of the activities that landowners have carried out on their own properties include linking vegetation corridors with the neighbouring national parks to allow a safe way of travel for local fauna and the fencing off of cattle from the streams that meander through their properties to prevent them from being contaminated down stream in other parts of the catchment. Landowners have planted 1000's of trees over the past few years with the fruits of their labours be apparent by the site of wonderful green corridors along some of the properties in the plateau.</p> <p>Dorrigo has more than one active Landcare group including one that is established at the local high school. The local gardening club is also proactive in preserving natural heritage as part of their beautification of the township, they plant natives in lots of area to encourage bird life and preserve a number of significant trees that in located in park areas.</p>											
Promotion of conservation values to residents and visitors											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
<p>The promotion of conservation values to the residents and visitors to Dorrigo is in done via articles in the Don Dorrigo newspaper and signage that is placed in areas of significance outlining its significance or that the area is part of a Landcare group activity.</p>											
SCORE											

Additional Comments

Dorrigo township has a lot to offer in the form of natural heritage and beauty that is not taken for granted by the locals who work together to preserve these pristine areas for generations to come

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
<p>State and government support for water conservation projects in the Dorrigo Plateau is received from: Department of Lands, North Coast Water, upper Nymboida River Health Project, Farm Forests and the Catchment Management Authority along with the ongoing support received from Bellingen Shire Council. Grants and support received enable the community to achieve positive results in maintaining water quality in their catchment areas.</p>											
<p>Community involvement</p>											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
<p>There are still a number of properties who are not on town water which keeps water conservation high on their agenda for some. Even though the average rainfall in Dorrigo is quite high, Dorrigo sits high above most of the catchment areas downstream, so the community is very aware of the need to keep their waterways clean. They do this by the maintenance of riparian areas, fencing off creeks from livestock and planting suitable natives. Alternative water holes or facilities have also been provided by farmers</p>											
<p>Innovation</p>											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
<p>The way in which private landholders are involved in the preservation of a resource that is rich on their own properties such as the creeks and waterways that meander through the plateau is quite innovative in that there are not many farmers I would imagine who would fence the water away from their livestock and then provide them with alternative access to drinking water. Farming properties are usually established in areas where there is flowing water to reduce the need to supply water to their animals. The taking of this action for the benefit of a broader community and other industries is a 360 from former farming practices. A very commendable and unselfish act.</p> <p>Outside of private properties the riparian areas are cleared, revegetated and maintained by the community Landcare groups.</p>											
<p>SCORE</p>											

<p>Additional Comments</p> <p>The more that I saw in Dorrigo, the more that I was amazed at how much the locals cared for their whole environment and how what they were doing had impacted on others.</p>

<p>TOTAL SCORE (ENVIRONMENT)</p>

MANAGEMENT OF VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES (15%)

Level of volunteer support											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
<p>In township of Dorrigo with a population of approx 1200 people there are 123 active committees and community groups who carry out a range of volunteer activities through out the community. Given the number of committees that are active in Dorrigo, one can assume that many would be on more than one committee or community group. The level of volunteer support provided by individuals, business owners/managers who also volunteer their support from time to time and organised groups within the community is indicative of the very high level of social capital that exists within the community.</p> <p>Volunteers operate the local museum, visitors centre, maintain the public gardens in the township, manage sporting teams, operate the school canteen, lead scouting activities, coordinate Landcare activities, organise fund raising events, manage the hospital auxiliary, revegetating riparian zones, planting wildlife corridors, provide services to the local RSL, fighting fires and so the list goes on.</p> <p>The hours of volunteer support provided by and to the community of Dorrigo are endless. Chances are that 24/7 there is somebody somewhere doing some volunteer work in Dorrigo.</p>											
Management of volunteer community activities											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
<p>Management of volunteers is undertaken by the various committees and groups in the township. With regard to the TT committee, there are currently 16 active members from a variety of backgrounds and vocations who sit and work together on TT activities as well as others. The TT committee work very closely with the Dorrigo Chamber of Commerce with some members sitting on both committees.</p> <p>There is something that occurs every week in Dorrigo as a result of volunteer activities in Dorrigo with most of them being report in the 'Don Dorrigo' news.</p>											

<p>No of volunteer hours contributed in the judging period (July 2006 – June 2007)</p> <p><i>The volunteers say that there is too many to count. If you use the numbers of between 5-15 members on average who participate on the 123 committees.</i></p> <p><i>123x7.5 peoplex2hours per week.=</i> <i>1875x52 weeks pa =</i> <i>97,500 vol hrs pa in total</i></p> <p><i>If these people were paid a base rate of \$16 per hour the combined dollar rate of their time equates to \$1.56M in value that they freely give to their community</i></p>	<p>97,500 vol hours</p>	
<p>TOTAL SCORE</p>		

Additional Comments

As was said in their application 'how long is a piece of string?'

I used the abovementioned formula based on the figures that have been provided in the application form to come up with the figures above. Given what I observed during my stay in Dorrigo I would almost say that this would be a conservative estimate of the amount of volunteer hours worked over a year.

Tidy Towns Program 2007 Assessors Report

Overall Town Entry

Summary

Dorrigo is situated north west of Coffs Harbour at an elevation of 762 metres above sea level. As you approach the township you will notice a sign that says 'Welcome to Dorrigo' and lists past Tidy Town Awards, as well as acknowledges the towns service groups. The picturesque surroundings of the township which is part of the Waterfall Way are a vision to behold. With a higher than average rainfall the area is green and lush compared to many other parts of NSW. Their latest catch phrase which is embroidered on the TT committee shirts that were being sported around town during assessment say 'Dorrigo – where the mountains meet the sky' above a logo that has been developed as a part of their tourism strategy.

The township of Dorrigo is doubly blessed with a splendid natural beauty and an extremely high level of social capital. It appears that they community at the drop of a hat will put their hands together for a cause whether it be to help a team of students represent their local school, work together on preserving the local environment and catchment areas, raising funds for community initiatives and facilities or working collaboratively with the local council on strategies to improve tourism, the streetscape, accessibility or almost anything you care to mention. There is a strong culture of volunteerism within the township with an estimated 20% or more of the population who freely give their time to the community. The actual number is unknown because no one has ever counted.

Highlights/Innovation

- The innovative consultative approach that was undertaken by the TT committee before putting their application in to KAB. An A3 poster was developed that identified each of the categories that could be entered. This poster was then displayed in business and community venues inviting members of the community to have input. Great concept, whilst at Dorrigo I was shown some of these posters on which some people had taken the time to put their comments forward. Great idea.
- Upon meeting the whole TT committee over lunch at the wonderful Fresh Café, I received an official welcome to Gumbayngir Country from Robin Heath of the Local Lands Council. To me this was an honour that I have

not experienced before. Thank you very much Robin, I feel privileged to have received a personal welcome to your country whilst acknowledging the elders past and present.

- The people I met in Dorrigo were some of the nicest and most hospitable people I have had the pleasure to meet along with a couple of wonderful characters to add colour to the mix.
- The level of fundraising that is done by the community on a regular basis. It is estimated by one of the TT committee that the people of Dorrigo would donate on average \$1,000 per capita per annum towards community initiatives.
- The generosity of many of the local businesses in supporting TT and other community groups. Some examples of this are the local baker who cooks food for large functions in his wood fired oven, the RSL club offering their venue free of charge for fundraising events and community group meetings, the many donations made by some of the business for prizes that can be raffled or used for other fund raising activities. These are just a few examples as the list goes on.
- The proactive way the Chamber of Commerce got together a campaign to get a doctor for Dorrigo when they lost their GP. The group put money together and funded an advertising campaign using all forms of media, they offered financial incentives and subsidised accommodation. The result being that Dorrigo had a new doctor in 3 months.
- There were too many highlight moments for me in Dorrigo to mention in this report. I almost got writers cramp making notes while doing the assessment. The volunteers and committee members had to constantly wait for me to finish writing. Dorrigo is definitely worth a visit where you should stay for a while to take in the beauty and relaxing pace of the township. I will certainly go back.

Suggestions/Recommendations

- Keep up the good work and enthusiasm
- Keep smiling
- Don't ever lose your passion
- Ask for a longer assessment time next year

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank everyone that I met in Dorrigo. I was lucky enough to be based in the town for a couple of days and had a bit of time to wander on my own and enjoy your township.

I would like to thank the lovely lady who owns Fresh Restaurant whose name escapes me. The food and atmosphere is fantastic. Fresh provided us with an amazing lunch, has a room set up as a display of TT activities which was fantastic.

Thank you to the Mayor of Bellingen Shire Council for the information package and CD, and also to the councillors and staff who took the time to trek around with me whilst on assessment.

A special thanks to the outdoor council staff in Dorrigo with whom I had morning tea. I have a copy of our group photo that will have a place on my office wall. Congratulations to all of you for the good job you do on the outdoor areas of Dorrigo and the support you give to the community volunteers.

I would like to especially acknowledge three foxy ladies who made me laugh so many times with their character and sense of humour. Ruth, Desmae and Phylis, I would like to send a hug to the three of you. Memories of the time I spent with you still brings a smile to my face.

To Dave Hitchcock and Ian Judd, what can I say? Thank you for organising the assessment in Dorrigo and arranging for my accommodation before I got there and thank you for everything else you have done. It was a pleasure.

Thank you to the all of TT committee members, I was going to name you all, but I was worried that I would spell your names wrong because I was having trouble reading Ian's writing. (*I think as a teacher, he should write a bit neater*)

Acknowledgement should also be given to the Chamber of Commerce, the staff and management of the RSL, the staff at Dorrigo National Park, all the members of the various committees and community groups within Dorrigo who have contributed so many hours for the betterment of your local community.

I hope I haven't missed anybody. Congratulations to everyone once again. Keep up the great stuff that you do.

Regards
Chris Jeffreys