

# Sunday parking review

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## Controversial fees put under microscope

SUNDAY parking fees are finally under review after an outcry from businesses trying and failing to make an honest buck in a weekend wasteland.

The introduction of paid weekend parking has been one of this Cairns Regional Council's most controversial policies to date with shop owners crying foul about a customer exodus from the city centre.

The council has now ordered a study to compare current Sunday visitation to numbers before paid weekend

parking was introduced at the start of the year.

In calling for the review, Division 5 Cr Richie Bates said he had been bombarded with complaints from CBD businesspeople.

He also called for numbers on how much revenue the council had made through weekend parking fees and fines.

Mayor Bob Manning said the appraisal would begin early next year.

"All councillors will agree

that, whether we think we're right or we're not right, it's just not clicking with the public," he said.

"I know there's a plan.

"But sometimes, plans are able to be undermined in some way.

"We're certainly not hitting the right spot with our ratepayers on this at the moment."

Cairns Chamber of Commerce president Nick Loukas said no other single issue drew as much dissatisfaction from local traders.

"There's some disagreement, even within the chamber, about the benefits of paid weekend parking," he said.

"I'm actually for it, others are against.

"What we all agree on is there needs to be a fresh look at it.

"The amount of complaints we get is just extraordinary."

Mr Loukas stopped short of calling for the return of the heady old days of parking anarchy, when weekend drunks dumped their cars in town for

days without fear of financial reprisal.

He suggested some middle ground could be found – perhaps making the first two hours free, then policing the restrictions with an iron fist.

The confusion between one-hour parks, two-hour parks and three-hour parks was also sore point.

"I'm not advocating there shouldn't be any free parking," he said.

"But we're not getting the turnover, there's not the incen-

tive for people to stay in town long enough.

"It just needs a fresh approach."

CBRE Cairns director Danny Betros will represent the chamber in discussions with the council.

Cr Manning said the first step was to get a clear picture of the issue.

"We'll get the data, we'll get the right data, and we'll work off that," he said.

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