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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **MOVES TO MAKE MUSEUM MORE ACCESSIBLE**

Coonamble's *Museum Under The Bridge* is on the move to make its extensive collection more accessible to locals and the touring public.

Mayor Tim Horan said, "This is a timely and proactive step to safeguard the future of the museum's holdings and maximise visitation and its benefits to the community." He further said that a trigger for the proposed move has been a recent structural engineer's report, highlighting the ravages of time to the quality of the mortar within some sections of the museum and stables buildings. This decay has compromised the integrity of some of the walls within the buildings, requiring its immediate closure for public safety. Further reports are needed to assess the cost and viability of rectifying these issues.

In a decisive step to address these and other issues, Coonamble Shire Council resolved at its April Ordinary Meeting to request a report from staff on options to relocate the museum, both as an interim measure and for the longer term.

Housed in the 1886-built police station, courthouse and stables complex, the museum and its collection has been tucked away under the Sir Edward Hallstrom Bridge, taking Castlereagh Highway traffic over the Castlereagh River and past the museum's front door.

While the historical building complex is the ideal setting for a museum, the elevation of the approach to the bridge and the lack of easy parking mean tourists often drive past the building without calling in to see the collection of early European colonial artefacts. Currently staffing levels also mean the museum is only opened by appointment, further limiting access to this tourist attraction.

The artefacts held by the museum – such as machinery, kitchenware, communications equipment and photographs – transformed the traditional lands of the Wayilwan and Gamilaraay people. Council sees the museum's move as an opportunity to more explicitly acknowledge the ongoing involvement of these peoples in the Shire.

General Manager Paul Gallagher said Council staff will firstly produce a report on an interim site for the museum's collection, such as the Coonamble Information and Exhibition Centre or another suitable site, then prepare a further report to identify a permanent site for the collection.

Community input is welcome through the 'Have Your Say' link on the homepage of Council's website.

#### **Media Inquiries to:**

Mr Paul Gallagher, General Manager, Coonamble Shire Council, (02) 6827 1900.