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Mayor determined to swing changes for Festival Cairns

Not even Amateurs is safe

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THE famous Amateurs racing carnival may be booted out of the Festival Cairns line-up as part of a major shake-up that is on its way.

Mayor Val Schier yesterday confirmed everything about the festival was up for discussion, from the date and the length to what and how many events were included.

"Some people think there's too much crammed into such a short space of time," Cr Schier said.

"We already have Amateurs in September and a lot of people think that's a stand-alone event."

She stressed all suggestions, such as ones she had floated this week about giving the festival a nationally distinctive environmental or indigenous cultural theme, were all "just ideas" being looked at in the lead-up to planning sessions early next year for the 2010 event.

Next year's festival, for which tenders close at the end of this month, would probably not be changed much because of time constraints.

"We think Festival Cairns is great, but we think it can be even better," she said.

"Festivals don't stay the same, they grow and develop and drop off some things."

Council cultural services and facilities manager Leslie Sparkes said a definite "swing" towards giving the festival a theme had emerged out of surveys and face-to-face talks with more than 1000 people. Themed festivals, such as the Woodford Folk Festival or the Burning Man Festival in the US, attracted people from all over the world, she said.

Cairns Amateurs president Alan McPherson yesterday said Festival Cairns was deliberately moved to September during a revamp seven

years ago to "hang off the shirt-tails of Amateurs".

But he agreed the racing carnival was a stand-alone event and he would support moving the festival to later in the year, possibly October.

"I have concerns that combining so many things at the one time affects people's spending ability because they can't afford to go to everything," Mr McPherson said.

Long-time Festival Cairns publicist Pip Miller said the festival already had its own distinctive identity but had failed to attract interstate visitors because of a lack of marketing dollars.

"I would be very cautious about going and redefining its format," Ms Miller said.

She also believed September was the city's best month and the perfect time to showcase its beauty before the heat set in.

YOUR TEXTS

Totally agree with the mayors revamp of festival cairns. The past few years have been drab, boring and out of touch. Most of the events are embarrassing to call international events to say the least. It's also drastically lacking in youth oriented activities, and they wonder why there is violence on the streets - there is nothing for the kids to do.

Trent, Punchy.

Re: Festival Revamp. Leave OUR festival alone Val! If its not broke dont fix it! Sick of evrything having 2 hav message re: environment or indigenous! Cant us locals just hav fun!! I think we deserve it.

Karen, Redlynch.

Gd on u Val, dull fest nds shake up. Rio D Cairns ripper.

Rovi, Mt Sheridan.