



30 September 2011

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This submission is in relation to the enquiry regarding the FIFO/DIDO Inquiry by the Standing Committee on Regional Australia. This submission particularly considers the terms of reference relating to the effect of a non-resident FIFO/DIDO workforce on established communities, including community wellbeing, services and infrastructure.

Gladstone in Queensland is experiencing an accommodation crisis which is a direct result of the lack of sufficient temporary village style accommodation for the complete non-resident FIFO/DIDO workforce. The effect of the accommodation crisis is a reduction in basic and essential services within Gladstone; this is currently and will increasingly affect long-term residents and Gladstone businesses. In the recent months there have been Gladstone Healthcare Workers, Teachers, and others who have now moved from Gladstone due to the increased cost of rental accommodation. The high cost of rental accommodation has made Gladstone an unattractive option for new Health Care Workers and many other skilled workers who would have otherwise considered a permanent career in Gladstone and then become part of the Gladstone community.

As a direct consequence of this accommodation crisis:

- There are medical outreach programs that have now ceased due to lack of reasonable and affordable accommodation for a visiting specialist
- Two immigration sponsorships for specialised hospital staff from overseas have been withdrawn due to the accommodation issue. Recruits for hospital positions are often young couples with young children and only one partner working.
- There are healthcare workers unable to manage the high rents and unable to purchase a house due to their visa status.
- There is a current and significant impact on the ability to recruit new nursing graduates to move to Gladstone to enable hospitals to provide postgraduate nursing programs
- It is difficult and more expensive to accommodate Locums to enable continuation of services during leave
- Families who rent now have difficulty finding suitable accommodation
- A midwife sponsored two years ago from South Africa will be leaving Gladstone due to unending rise in rental costs

- A nurse appointed in November 2010 and paying rent of \$375 per week has experienced recent rent increases to \$500 and now to \$800 forcing her to move back to Victoria
- It is now not an attractive option for many Healthcare workers, teachers and others who are renting to move to or continue working in Gladstone. Many healthcare workers and others who are renting cannot afford to purchase a house.

Information received from Gladstone residents indicates:

- Practices of 7 to 12 men living in four bedroom houses,
- Caravans are parked at the Calliope historical village nightly as there are no caravan locations in caravan parks in Gladstone
- Industry taken over the Barney Point Caravan Park completely for their workers for approx 50 cabins
- Industry has bought Motels and changed double rooms to single bed shared rooms for workers
- Other Motels have confirmed bookings for the next 2 years Monday to Friday for industry workers.
- Accommodation costs of \$10,000 for 26days accommodation for a locum and his family
- Real Estate agent indicates that rent for a basic 3 bedroom home has now increased to \$500 per week

There are a few things that are apparent:

- Gladstone is losing qualified and trained workers across the entire workforce due to unaffordable rents.
- The effects of the rental crisis are inflationary.
- The big winners are real estate speculators.
- The big losers are the Gladstone residents and businesses that lose staff and those that pay more for basic rental accommodation.
- Gladstone has already lost some of its permanent skilled workforce.
- The financial beneficiaries of lack of planning are the developers.
- FIFO/DIDO workers are never an integral part of the community.
- Gladstone is no longer an affordable option for many families not directly engaged in the developments engaging the FIFO/DIDO workers
- Recruitment and staff retention in Gladstone will become increasingly difficult
- Services in Gladstone will be reduced

Options are needed to reduce the severity of the negative impact on the local community. Local & State planning and approval did not adequately consider the implication for the local community as a consequence of the current number and size of the heavy industrial

developments. Otherwise, they may have avoided the effect of the rental crisis which is tearing at the infrastructure of the Gladstone community. Developments requiring a FIFO/DIDO workforce should not be approved without strict conditions and adequate compliance around their establishment of a sufficient number of temporary accommodation villages (that are separate and additional to existing accommodation infrastructure) to completely accommodate the entire FIFO/DIDO workforce. This Gladstone accommodation crisis could have been avoided if temporary construction villages to completely accommodate the many hundreds of FIFO/DIDO workers had been mandated with the FIFO/DIDO workforce transported by bus to their worksites.