

7 October 2010

House Standing Committee on Regional Australia  
House of Representatives  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

To Whom it May Concern

This submission into the report on the use of 'fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) and 'drive-in, drive-out' (DIDO) workforce practices in regional Australia is sent on behalf of the Whitsunday Industrial Workforce Development (WIWD) Steering Group (Attachment A – Steering Group membership).

The Whitsunday Industrial Workforce Development initiative was born through a Skills Formation Strategy (SFS). Funded through Skills Queensland, an SFS is a framework to develop an industry and community network capable of planning and fostering a workforce relevant to its future.

WIWD Vision: To bring together industry representatives and address industrial workforce development issues relevant to their needs for the short, medium and long term future of the Whitsunday region.

WIWD Objective : To build a sustainable, skilled, local workforce, capable of meeting the industrial expansion of the Whitsunday Region.

The approach is to first gain an understanding of workforce issues and what industry's needs are, and collaborate with industry and community bodies to address the issues that will then impact on the ways in which skilling occurs. In a high-growth area such as the Whitsundays, where the local workforce cannot keep up with the demand, it is also about attracting and retaining skilled workers to the area.

WIWD believe a FIFO and DIDO workforce is a positive for the Whitsunday region however, there needs to be real collaboration and co-ordination to prepare the region to ensure local business and their existing and future workforce gain the maximum benefit from the economic growth to service and support the mining boom for the benefit of the community.

Five platforms have been established to allow WIWD to work with a broad cross section of stakeholders to respond to the anticipated challenges facing the region. (Attachment B – Action Platforms)

WIWD's response to the Terms of Reference for the Standing Committee is as follows:

- **the extent and projected growth in FIFO/DIDO work practices, including in which regions and key industries this practice is utilised;**

Whitsunday Region and mining through Galilee and Bowen Basins to the port of Abbot Point. The proposed mining activity in the Galilee and Bowen Basins will lead to the creation of an estimated 25,000 jobs across the region in the next few years once the accompanying infrastructure needs are also taken into account. In addition to the jobs in the mines, and building



and maintaining the requisite infrastructure, many of these jobs will also be created in the mining services industry and other local support businesses.

A number of mining companies have indicated they will require a 100% FIFO workforce a percentage of which will come from the Whitsunday region.

In 2009-10, the mining or resources sector generated 1,166 jobs or 6.6 per cent of the entire workforce in the Whitsunday Region and contributed at least \$126million in economic stimulus. The sector is positioned to rapidly increase with new operations and expansion to existing operations occurring in the Bowen and Galilee Basins. There are current shortages of critical roles within the mining industry as the sector competes for a shrinking workforce. Queensland's ability to realise the full economic benefits of these projects relies on the availability of a skilled workforce.

➤ **costs and benefits for companies, and individuals, choosing a FIFO/DIDO workforce as an alternative to a resident workforce;**

Benefits

- Whitsunday Airport location and cost of FIFO from Proserpine to targeted regions of Alpha. Both Whitsunday Council, Enterprise Whitsunday and WIWD are working towards increased flights from Brisbane to Proserpine based on tourism numbers and requirements of FIFO workers.
- Lifestyle and cost of living in Whitsunday is less than other more developed centres, more conducive for family oriented attraction.
- Diverse economy with provision of choice for secondary employment eg Tourism and Agriculture sectors.

Costs

- Flights from Prosperine to mine – cost to underwrite additional costs required from Prosperine to Alpha or Galilee Basin.
- **the impact on communities sending large numbers of FIFO/DIDO workers to mine sites;**
- Loss of skills from regional areas – The WIWD steering committee which incorporates some of the major mining lease companies for the Galilee and Bowen Basins are working towards creating a model to grow skills within the region with sustainable outcomes for both the mines and local industry.
  - Social impacts for FIFO/DIDO workers and families – social support to families of FIFO workers is out of the scope of WIWD however it is believed that there could potentially be a lack of support services for families who relocate to the region. The WIWD Supply Platform which is looking at attraction, infrastructure and environment for workers to the region there will be various strategies which will be developed to respond to some of the issues associated with retention of workers and their families to the region.



- **long term strategies for economic diversification in towns with large FIFO/DIDO workforces;**
  - WIWD is working to bring together industry representatives and address industrial workforce development issues relevant to their needs for the short, medium and long term future of the Whitsunday region. The initial funding commitment is over a 2 year period however, WIWD will work towards creating sustainable long term mechanisms to respond to issues related to FIFO/DIDO workforce. (Attachment C – WIWD Newsletter)
- **key skill sets targeted for mobile workforce employment, and opportunities for ongoing training and development;**
  - Under the Capability Platform a number of strategies are being developed to ensure there is an adequate supply of skilled labour for the region. Among other things an apprenticeship model is being developed and support for a Business Capability/Training Needs Analysis is being sought. A Research paper has been developed which will inform the future actions of the WIWD Steering Committee and the Action Platforms.
- **provision of services, infrastructure and housing availability for FIFO/DIDO workforce employees;**
  - The WIWD Supply Platform has provided a response to the Draft Mackay Isaac & Whitsunday Regional Plan. The submission was provided to help manage the influx and existing skills required to support the proposed growth in the Whitsunday Regional Council (WRC) area and to encourage workers to base their families in the region by ensuring there is adequate social infrastructure. The WIWD submission focused on the WRC area and the extent of land available for development for industrial and residential uses. (Attachment D – Submission to Draft Mackay Isaac & Whitsunday Regional Plan)
- **strategies to optimise FIFO/DIDO experience for employees and their families, communities and industry;**
  - The above mentioned strategies will optimise FIFO/DIDO experience for employees, their families, community and industry
- **potential opportunities for non-mining communities with narrow economic bases to diversify their economic base by providing a FIFO/DIDO workforce;**
  - Already in place for Whitsunday region due to Tourism and Agriculture base
- **current initiatives and responses of the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments; and any other related matter.**
  - WIWD is a two year funded project through Skills Qld and the Queensland Government Department of Education and Training. The Research Document developed by the WIWD Project Officer outlines a range of strategies and initiatives from both state and federal government. The Research Document can be obtained upon request.

Yours sincerely

Colin Thompson  
WIWD Steering Group Chairperson