



17th February 2014

Dr Bill Pender
Committee Secretary - Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA, ACT, 2600
email: jscna@aph.gov.au

Dear Dr Pender,

Re: Whitsunday Region – Powering Australia

Inquiry into the Development of Northern Australia

The Whitsunday Regional Organisation of Councils (Whitsunday ROC) represents the Local Government areas of Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday (Whitsunday Region).

The Whitsunday Region has demonstrated its ability to play a key role in powering Australia through the largest resources boom and its contribution to the national economy.

The Region's GRP is \$22 Billion. With a population of 171 000, Whitsunday leads Queensland's GRP per capita at \$133, 143; double that of Brisbane*. This contribution to the economy has occurred even without all the impediments for growth being addressed.

As an organisation we support this opportunity to address impediments, strategically plan for infrastructure and improve conditions to support investment and innovation.

Recommendations to the Joint Select Committee for industry and policy development that support this Inquiry are outlined in three priority categories:

1. Potential Development of Regional Industries
2. Impediments to Growth
3. Federal and Local Government Partnerships

The Whitsunday ROC welcomes the opportunity to elaborate further with the committee at an Inquiry hearing in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Cr. Deirdre Comerford
Chair

*GRP Source: Queensland Treasury and Trade, March 2013 – GRP 2010/11

**POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
OF REGIONS INDUSTRIES**

MINING AND RESOURCES

*Demonstrated ability to
meet demand.*

**MINING AND RESOURCES
SUPPLY CHAIN**

*Supply Chain Hub equipped
to support and expand upon
Resource demand.*

AGRICULTURE

*Paddock to Ports, increasing
production to meet national
and international demand*

TOURISM

*Existing Natural Assets and
Global Brand to attract
emerging markets and grow
existing.*

The Whitsunday Region has demonstrated success as a resource economy which has powered Australia through the largest mining boom since the Gold Rush era. Further capacity for development is welcomed in Mineral and Gas Mining with key Infrastructure in place and further investment required meeting demand.

An established supply chain that supports the Resource and Agriculture sectors can be built upon and extended, further strategy inclusive of promotion of this supply chain to attract expansion of International Companies and their corporate footprint to the Whitsunday Region.

Diversification of this Supply Chain to explore innovative technologies – clean coal, renewable energy and value add products to support growing demand from Asia will require research, incentives and export initiatives.

Strong foundations exist with available Industrial Land and Supply Chain Precincts across the Whitsunday Region supported by Local and State Government Planning. Tertiary Institution Partnerships to deliver best practice and innovative technology in the specialist field of Mining and Engineering. Planned urban development to ensure liveability to support the resident workforce required.

The Region encompasses the important Agricultural areas of Bowen, East Coast and the Golden Mile Area (DAFF Qld Agriculture Land Audit 2013). Horticulture, broad acre cropping, Sugarcane, intensive livestock and aquaculture industries paired with proximity provide a market window for the rising middleclass of Asia and domestic markets. The Region's agriculture assets are located to take advantage of existing rail corridors and proposed port expansion plans (both maritime and air).

A globally recognised brand underpinned by Natural Assets strongly positions the Whitsunday Region to capitalise the tourism growth from Asia and increase growth from Western markets. Protection of unique environment and sustainable tourism development will ensure the Whitsunday Region holds its natural advantage over Metropolitan drawcards in other parts of Australia Pacific.

DEFENCE

Strategic Placement to protect Critical National Economic Infrastructure

DIGITAL AGE

Live regionally operate globally

IMPEDIMENTS TO GROWTH

Costly to do business in North Queensland

Critical Infrastructure

Priority Investment Areas:

Currently the larger Defence Assets and Resources are situated at the Southern End of Australia. The Whitsunday Region is custodian to 'Critical Economic Infrastructure' which supports the National Economy. Strategic protection of these assets provides an opportunity to re-locate or expand Defence in the Whitsunday Region which also supports regional development by way of diversification and population dispersion. Defence training and Pre-deployment opportunities to be expanded to the Whitsunday region.

The opportunity for regional centres to attract business and increase population utilising digital infrastructure, increased investment supports a digital economy for global business doors to open.

Finance and Investment (Policy setting to be conducive)

Distance (Freight and Logistic transport investment)

Energy (Investment in Base load Power and Renewables)

Insurance Costs (Natural Disasters – unique zoning)

Infrastructure Inadequacy (Tele-communications, Roads)

The Whitsunday Region acknowledges the existing strategic infrastructure, however further strategic planning to trigger staged investment is required:

1. Strategic Planning and utilisation of existing Assets – e.g. Strategic Ports to consider Agricultural export in conjunction with other commodity exports.
2. Transport Infrastructure – current road and rail capacity competition is inhibiting increased production and access to markets.
3. Ports Development – Maritime and Air to support export of products, logistics to support key industry supply chains and tourism imports. Containerisation capability to value add.
3. Water Infrastructure – Water is abundant in North Queensland however lacks the infrastructure to support sub-regions and the industries within to develop and expand production. Currently there are competing demands with Mining and Agriculture.

FEDERAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP

Developing Northern Australia is a Federal initiative which will deliver for the National Economy and provide global opportunities for Industries. Regional Economic Development whether led by Federal or State Government ultimately delivers greatest impacts to Local Government and the communities which make up regional centres. Impacts both positive and negative are impacts which Local Government is not always resourced to manage.

Federal Investment to ensure infrastructure and economic development programs are delivered through strategic coordination and a collaborative process with Local Government to ensure Northern Australia is developed sustainably.

The Whitsunday Region welcomes and endorses the process by which the economic opportunities will be identified throughout the Inquiry. The Whitsunday ROC urges the Joint Select Committee and Taskforce to examine potential governance or advisory models utilising Mayors and Regional Organisation of Councils to communicate, engage and collaboratively work in partnership with Local Government to maximise the benefits of Developing Northern Australia.