



Townsville Chamber of Commerce

Making Business Connections

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Townsville Futures Plan
C/- Dept. Local Government and Planning
PO Box 5666
Townsville Q 4810

9 September 2011

Dear Sir,

RE: Submission on Draft Townsville Futures Plan

The Townsville Chamber of Commerce appreciates the opportunity to provide this submission on the *Draft Townsville Futures Plan* ('the Plan').

Vision

The Chamber welcomes the Plan and its purpose to provide a framework to maximise the City's potential and, importantly, elevate the role Townsville plays in the State's future.

The City's competitive advantage to other regional areas is well recognised. Townsville is centrally located to the identified Queensland Economic zones for minerals, agriculture and tourism and has strong research and development capacities in areas of tropical living, health and clean energy to assist in diversifying economies beyond the historic sectors of the North.

The Chamber endorses the findings of the Plan which recognises the readiness of this Region to accept and deliver sustainable development and stimulate further growth.

Strategies & Actions

The Chamber recently surveyed its members and recurring themes raised focused on regionalisation, inner-City development, infrastructure development (roads, water, energy, and telecommunications), training, retention of skilled staff and Government services and leadership.

It is noted that the Plan similarly recognises these themes which, for the purposes of the Plan, are grouped as Infrastructure and Services, Business and Innovation, People, Lifestyle, Image and Marketing and Leadership and Decision Making.

The Plan establishes strategies for action on each of these themes. These strategies and actions are supported by the Chamber.

However, the Chamber questions the timing of some of the strategies which do not necessarily reflect priorities that are known to be more pressing. The relevance of some of the proposed ‘turbochargers’, for example the NBN network roll-out and Townsville State Development Area review, reflect current policy undertakings that have commenced and remain on-going. We argue some of the proposed catalysts do not accelerate new opportunities as much as they maintain current ones.

We suggest more meaningful and immediate accelerants be considered and propose that the following strategies have their timing promoted to a more immediate future:

- Strategy 1.1 (a): establish a second capital state-local government infrastructure planning advisory group to co-ordinate infrastructure planning needs and to advise Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Priority Infrastructure Plan needs and priorities
- Strategy 1.7 (a): identify viable base load power generation options to meet the region’s growing needs in collaboration with private sector stakeholders
- Strategy 3.2 (a): establish a regular regional government/business advisory group to identify skills shortages in the regional population and opportunities for joint solutions that build Townsville’s ability to service and support regional skills requirements
- Strategy 4.2: recognise the role of the CBD as the dominant centre for administration, commerce, retailing, culture, entertainment and prestige events

The Chamber strongly encourages moving quickly from many of the investigative actions anticipated in the Plan as to promptly locate and deliver services and facilities. A clear example of this is the introduction of administrative services to the region and the deliberate budgeting of specific infrastructure funding for items such as base load energy supply and highway and rail corridor development. Such prompt actions, from investigations to outcomes, would fuel growth and deliver meaningful implementation of the Plan.

Implementation

The Chamber is concerned that the document remains non-binding and is not supported by active strategies that will give effect to early implementation. It remains subject to the collective good-will of all stakeholders over an undetermined period of time.

To ensure appropriate and effective implementation, we believe the document should include an immediate action that provides for the commitment of funding for

- i. the establishment of an cross-sectoral Advisory Panel inclusive of the Director General, advocacy bodies and industries, to oversee implementation;
- ii. the engagement of an Implementation Officer on a fixed tenure for the duration of the Plan, to oversee and report on the achievement of Actions to support the Strategies, within nominated timeframes; and

- iii. the reporting of the Advisory Panel to a senior government champion, for example the Treasurer, to ensure the Plan's continued support from all levels of Government.

Lastly, the Chamber stresses the importance of the Townsville Future's Plan as the corner stone document for other plans currently under consultation, namely the Queensland Regionalisation Strategy, the Bruce Highway Upgrade Strategy and the Queensland Infrastructure Plan. The Chamber is responding to those plans in separate correspondence which makes reference to our comments about the Townsville Future's Plan

We trust these submissions are of assistance and would welcome the opportunity to expand on them with you should you require.

The Chamber looks forward to continuing an active role in the implementation of the Plan.

Yours Faithfully,



MARIE-CLAUDE BROWN
Executive Officer

cc: waytogrow@qld.gov.au