



QUEENSLAND
FUTURES INSTITUTE

BETTER IDEAS

BETTER CITIES, BETTER REGIONS

Better Ideas

Better Cities, Better Regions

Thursday 17 March
7:30am – 9:00am
Customs House,
399 Queen St, Brisbane

PANELISTS:



CR JACK DEMPSEY
Mayor
Bundaberg Regional Council



CR JENNY HILL
Mayor
City of Townsville



CR BOB MANNING OAM
Mayor
Cairns Regional Council



CR KAREN WILLIAMS
Mayor
Redland City Council



CR ADAM ALLAN
Councillor
Civic Cabinet Chair
City Planning & Suburban Renewal
Brisbane City Council



MODERATOR
DIANA LOLLATO
Executive Director
Local Government & Water
- Client Division
Queensland Treasury Corporation

Snapshot

The key theme from the 2022 Queensland Futures Institute Better Cities Better Regions Forum was the need for Councils to continue being resilient and community-oriented to deliver the best economic outcomes for the regions. This requires out-of-the-box thinking as they face budget constraints and shifting population needs.

There are many opportunities across Queensland's diverse industries which regional councils work to support. Key themes underpinning these economic opportunities include sustainability, collaboration across government and private sector, and leveraging existing and emerging strengths across regions.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

- Local councils must work hard to overcome difficulties faced in the current environment and deliver outcomes for their communities. Collaboration across government as well as adequate funding from the State is also needed to deliver these outcomes; without this, out-of-the-box thinking, and innovation is required to deliver these outcomes when otherwise constrained.
- Councils are focused on shifting demographics and populations, which have been driven by Covid and by the increased connectedness this has resulted in. This is increasing the need for planning of accommodation to avoid issues around housing affordability. There are other flow-on implications for health and infrastructure.
- These trends can be leveraged in the lead up to the Olympics, which presents a massive opportunity for the regions and adequate time for the required planning.
- Existing industries in the regions must also continue to be supported as they face new challenges around sustainable business models and the above trends. This includes the resources, tourism and defence industries.

Comments from Panel



Moderator - Diana Lollato, Executive Director, Local Government & Water, Client Division, Queensland Treasury Corporation

- The Forum is to explore the key themes which underpin economic development in the regions.
- These themes include building diverse industries, attracting and retaining skills, accessing capital, supporting catalytic infrastructure.



Councillor Jack Dempsey, Mayor, Bundaberg Regional Council

Question

Your region is building off a strong economic base in health, education and agriculture. Council has identified food tech, bio energy and defence as some of the emerging opportunities. What is Council's pathway to provide positive environmental and economic outcomes for the Bundaberg region. Noting - Council has a sustainable Bundaberg 2030 strategy?

- Bundaberg's excellent liveability and lifestyle is supported by a strong and diverse economic base across sectors including education, innovation and technology, health, agriculture and manufacturing.
- There is strength in the manufacturing sector in particular, with low cost and highly skilled labour.

- Bundaberg has also set carbon targets for 2050 and 2030. Achieving this requires business optimism, community engagement, and further contributes to the region's liveability and lifestyle.
- There is also opportunity as connectivity increases, which now enables 25 to 30% of the population to work from home. Along with broader shifts in population, there will be new opportunities and demand for health and tourism.
- Examples of these opportunities include new developments such as a bio-park and a clean data crypto bank, as well as the development of existing industry such as agriculture and defence. These existing industries are able to progress sustainable business models to develop biofuels and better leverage port assets respectively, which will see positive economic outcomes.
- Effective governance and planning are essential to enabling this development. This can also be enabled by delivering flagship projects which provide a foothold in the development of these industries – the bio-park being one example of this. Achieving this also requires community engagement and support.
- Agriculture will also benefit from increasingly sustainable business models as well as economic development. The Paradise Dam upgrades will support this industry, providing the second most secure water supply outside of the Ord River in WA.
- These developments must all be supported by health, education and connectivity to provide the workforce required to deliver them and support the region's community.



Councillor Jenny Hill, Mayor, City of Townsville

Question

Council has a number of different roles: as a provider of services, a promoter, a funder, a facilitator and a regulator for some activities. Your council works closely with business and industry organisations to plan for the city's growth. How do these partnerships work together to support new businesses, develop infrastructure and secure funding?

- It is critical that regional councils strive for positive community and economic outcomes for their regions and think outside the box to achieve this. It is also important to work collaboratively with state government and other councils. This is difficult under the current environment which hinders councils in facilitating business and economic growth opportunities; the stringency of the Crime and Corruption Commission and Office of Independent Assessor has obligated Council to exceed expectations to deliver for their communities.
- There are many projects underway including an eco-precinct development at Lansdowne, renewables developments across North Queensland, the North West Minerals Province at Mt Isa.
- Minerals and rare earths are greatly increasing in demand and value, driven by the growth in electric cars. Work is being done with the University of Queensland, QUT and James Cook University to develop capability in minerals.
- There is strong demand for sustainability from both inside and outside of the region. Minerals trading partners such as Korea have a carbon price, so it is crucial for sustainability to be considered throughout the mining process. This is driving change in the energy usage of projects and businesses. There are a number of developments focused on supporting this development in order to keep the price of energy viable for competition in minerals as well as advanced manufacturing.
- Global dynamics caused by the Ukraine crisis are also driving a flight to safety to Queensland minerals and manufacturing, being a safe place to invest away from the current conflict.
- People must be supported to live and work in the regions. This is achieved through providing quality education and opportunities for business.
- Development of infrastructure is critical to these industries. Council is supporting waste and storm water, telecommunications and energy infrastructure to provide the network these industries need to operate.
- Acquiring the required capital is a key challenge for industry which Council is also addressing, by attracting funds to the region.
- Defence is a key industry for Townsville, and Council continues to develop its policy strategy around this. For example, within a new smart precinct, simulation capabilities have been developed to support Defence training. This is attracting international allies to the region to use these facilities and train, building on other multilateral alliances such as Talisman Sabre.



Councillor Bob Manning OAM, Mayor, Cairns Regional Council

Question

Far North Queensland (with Cairns as the key city) is known for its stunning natural environment. Its key industries include agribusiness, tourism, marine services, health and education. To what extent has Covid affected the local economies and changed the thinking of the economic strategy for the Far North Queensland region?

- Council must use its position to influence business, State and Federal government to achieve outcomes for their communities.
- Cairns is a diverse and resilient economy that relies on more than just tourism, which accounts for about 10% of the region's economy. Having said that, following the difficulties caused by international border closures over Covid, the region is expecting to start to see a return of visitors.
- Defence is also a strong sector in Cairns, which is currently seeing a number of developments across Cairns and the region. One example of this is the Navy building the HMAS Cairns, replacing patrol boats with new OPVs, and focusing on sustainment capabilities in Cairns. Continuous upgrading and modification are critical for this industry as it prevents loss of the skilled labour required for these developments.
- There is a strong focus on leveraging existing strengths in tourism and also keeping track with innovations around sustainability and technology. This will support continued growth in visitors and raise the profile of the region to a leading tourism destination.
- This is important considering the population projection which estimates by 2100 there will be 750,000 people in the region, which requires planning now to support this in the future.



Councillor Karen Williams, Mayor, Redland City Council

Question

As the Nominee for the organising committee of the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, how could SEQ Councils work together to leverage off this opportunity to deliver positive outcomes for the individual council areas, the SEQ region, as well as the whole of Queensland?

- The last two years have been a test for local governments and following the challenges faced, it is important to have aspirations for the region over the next decade.
- A strength of the Council is collaboration with regional neighbours and thought leadership. For example, this has delivered deals with most capital cities in the country. This relationship-based development is necessary given the tight budgets faced by Council but also leads to out-of-the-box thinking, innovation and resilience.
- The Olympics will be an example of this collaboration across three levels of government and bring together the broader region to deliver the required infrastructure and development needed to support the event and provide longer-term benefits. A key focus will also be ensuring that benefits are spread to wider regions of Queensland. The decade-long lead up to the Olympics means there is ample opportunity for the required planning and development.
- The Council has experience in this, providing out-of-the-box planning to deliver infrastructure for the community. The Council purchased Commonwealth land at Birkdale which provides opportunity for infrastructure development as needed and also opportunity to celebrate and reinvigorate heritage and local areas and strengthen the community. A white-water facility will also be built on this land, hosting the canoe slalom event during the Olympics and also providing training to emergency services, which is becoming increasingly needed due to the floods and events being seen due to climate change. This training will also be a drawcard for the region, attracting people from overseas.
- Council has a legacy working group and will be working collaboratively to deliver blue sky thinking to ensure opportunities are relevant to the Region and to the State. This will also ensure the inclusivity of the Games to cover broader regions, not just South East Queensland.



Councillor Adam Allan, Civic Cabinet Chair, City Planning and Suburban Renewal, Brisbane City Council

Question

There is always tension between balancing communities' expectations, including improving liveability, and balancing the budget. Where do you believe the biggest tensions are likely to come in the short, medium and long terms?

- The key role for Councils across the regions is change management. A key focus is setting priorities of community development under budget constraints.
- Brisbane is the fastest growing capital city in the country, with an expectation that we'll need to accommodate 300,000 additional people in the Brisbane LGA by 2041. In the March quarter of 2021 we had one of the highest quarterly increases in the last 25 years. We are managing population growth at a rate that's unprecedented. This gives rise to the need for accommodation and places pressure on affordability. It is Council's role to consider the urban spread and density of this increasing population and deal with the tensions associated with development. This also gives rise to the need for infrastructure across transport and connectivity.
- Looking to commerce and the private sector, there are opportunities to develop remnant industrial land and provide business opportunities across the community. This highlights the challenge between balancing accommodation, industrial and commercial development across the community.
- Balancing this, it is important to rely on Brisbane's neighbours such as the Redlands to support economic activity enabled by connectedness across the wider region and achieve a symbiotic relationship for South East Queensland.

Audience Question

What can we do better to represent populations in the health sector across studies, research and population samples?

Councillor Jack Dempsey, Mayor, Bundaberg Regional Council

- There is a large planning element which contributes to health outcomes and by extension health statistics. This includes the planning of outdoor activities and bike lanes etc which encourage healthy lifestyles and improve health outcomes.

Councillor Jenny Hill, Mayor, City of Townsville

- Planning methodologies are critical to health planning. While Council has greater control over planning and development of outdoor infrastructure, there needs to be a focus on the needs of the population. For example, there has been a large movement of people out of Indigenous communities into our cities. Given this demographic of the population has different health needs, this is a real planning issue which must be addressed. This is seen more greatly in the regions when disadvantaged people are being pushed into the regions and not into the cities due to housing affordability. This clearly needs multiple levels of government to address.

Councillor Karen Williams, Mayor, Redland City Council

- The demographics and health needs across the Redlands is very diverse given there are 10,000 people living on islands with limited access to health services, Indigenous communities and some more affluent parts as well.
- There is a strong overlap between affordability of housing and healthcare which interact and exacerbate this and lead to poorer health outcomes.

Councillor Bob Manning OAM, Mayor, Cairns Regional Council

- Governments can be severely constrained due to bureaucracy. When Council sees an issue, they must campaign to receive the adequate funding to address it. This requires collaboration across levels of government but often is done faster in the private sector. The ultimate goal for Council must be to achieve outcomes quickly and efficiently when they see these sorts of issues.

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