

— TOWNSVILLE NQ —

**BUY** *Local*

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POWERING OUR ECONOMY

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Townsville Chamber of Commerce

**Advocacy Charter**

*2015 to 2017*

# THE OPPORTUNITY

For a great part of its history, Townsville has enjoyed economic affluence, in part, due to its abundant natural resources of mineral, agriculture, fisheries, land and water; and in part, due to the resourcefulness of its people.

The diversity of Townsville's local economy has buffered the harshness of past economic cycles. Our stable diversity, however, is being tested by world-wide phenomena like disruptive technology and outsourcing.

Townsville is currently struggling with its limitations. Lack of confidence and political leadership has created an environment where businesses delay their investments. A soft economy, a lack of employment opportunities, slow construction and retail sectors are creating an ever widening negative spiral, the like Townsville has not seen in a generation.

In 2014, the Townsville Chamber conducted a Business Resilience survey to assess the sustainability of its members and the business and industry community. Townsville businesses rated above State average.

The survey confirmed what we knew already: Townsville is a good place to do business. Local businesses are across all elements of their organisations and are doing everything they can to make it through this tough time.

Local businesses have accepted the disruption brought in by technology and are embracing the opportunities of a global market. They are investing in their employees and their businesses and are reinventing their models in readiness for the future.

The development agenda of Northern Queensland and Northern Australia is gaining momentum as well as credibility, and projects to define the city are now on the national agenda.

Slowly, steadily, the city is going forward again.

The Chamber's priorities have not changed over the past several years, and readers of these pages will find echoes of our previous Charters.

Our advocacy emphasis over the next two years is on "Buy Local", a catch phrase to describe the impact of a variety of buyers' choices, from corporate purchasing policies to family household purchases.

"Buy Local" is a value and it is the Chamber's advocacy denominator now and into the future.

The Townsville Chamber remains steadfast in its vision to create the best environment for its members to do business, as we have for over 130 years.

# The Priorities

## *Jobs and Skills*

*Restore investment confidence leading to job creation and skill retention.*

- Unlock underutilized public holding through tenure conversion and sale to permit investment and production.
- Provide early lease commitments to new building projects to assist in confirmation of financial feasibility to allow construction commencement.
- Review work conditions including
  - o enhance the acquittal procedures of Government tenders to confirm that job creation is occurring within the region and not at remote capital locations
  - o reviewing trading hours as to not adversely affect independent retailers
  - o reviewing payroll tax rate to promote job start incentive
  - o continuing the review of legislative obligations and reporting requirements for small business
  - o review legislation governing large scale projects to afford protection to sub-contractors
  - o remove duplication and streamline approval and permit processes
  - o invest in the resourcing and development of base-line data to articulate actual peril and risk of damage for use by insurers and decision makers

Attention should also be given to

- targeting training grants and scholarships to advance the expertise found in the City in Tropical Living (design, health, disaster management) and actively market and export the applied expertise
- improving job start incentives for public projects, including a regional definition of 'local content'
- supporting program(s) that builds on Federal Government S457 Visa initiatives and assists with regional settlement.
- strengthening the educational offer for the training of domestic and international workers in the industries Townsville has experienced in– mining, freight/logistics, geology/geotechnical services, agricultural research and development, environmental research and data management, mineral processing and support services, as well as Defence industries and services, and tropical education and expertise

## *City Defining Projects*

*Support the city as it defines its future.*

- Maintain and enhance the primacy of the Townsville CBD as the largest and most important activity centre in Northern Australia,
- Include the provision of diversity and scale for employment and business opportunities in the CBD by -
  - o locating a range of administrative, civic, cultural, commercial, retail, tourism and education facilities within the CBD
  - o promoting city-defining projects such as the Integrated Stadium and Entertainment Centre, Creative Arts Precinct, Marine Study Precinct, and an Integrated Public Transport Facility
  - o creating a co-ordinated cross-government entity in Townsville to facilitate regional infrastructure planning and delivery.
- Facilitate the equitable retention and distribution of taxes and royalties raised from Northern GDP or from proceeds of any privatised northern asset sale as a catalyst to allow business location and investment in the region
- Augment the supply of affordable energy for existing operations and of potential operations through
  - o the provision of an in-region base load facility, supported by renewable energy sources
  - o a price competitive policy framework to attract and retain industry through reassessment of regional charges.
- Following the re-opening of the Queensland Department of Premier and Cabinet, Northern Queensland Office in 2015, continue to align public sector agencies with dominant industries operating between the Whitsundays and Cardwell, and west to Mount Isa, by –
  - o relocating the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM) or the Department of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP) to the City
  - o relocating senior operational staff from Departments, Government Bodies and Government owned entities to ensure access to decision makers and to permit career progression to senior levels within the City without need for relocation

## *Connectivity*

*Partner with other tiers of government to improve the City's connectivity.*

- Enhance the Townsville-Mt Isa Rail Corridor, specifically end-of-line facilities
- Develop the Port of Townsville's infrastructure to maintain a long-term port development strategy
- Overhaul current delivery strategies for the Townsville State Development Area to allow investment in intermodal facilities
- Continue to build on Townsville Airport's business, trade and freight capacity.
- Continue the forward planning and delivery of main roads and continued improvement to Highway flood immunity
- Actively engage in a specific public and private sector funded agenda to encourage the development of new enterprises focusing on:
  - o Information Technology – particularly where it is relevant to the existing and developing regional skills
  - o Communications – particularly where interaction can be simplified by technology over long distances
- invest in pilot projects to take advantage of high speed data connections for established businesses, increase opportunities for start-ups, and provide opportunity for technology creators
- Encourage the direction of existing industries toward a higher technological basis. This could be achieved by specific government incentives to existing industries and international companies, conditional upon basing operations in the Townsville region