



Gladstone Conservation Council Inc.

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Submission to the Select Committee on the effectiveness of the Australian Government's Northern Australia agenda

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Dear Sir/Madam,

We are the peak body for environmental groups in the Gladstone Region. Starting in 2011 as a result of the LNG plants being constructed on Curtis Island, we have grown rapidly and we now have a local Community group project called Repower Gladstone. We are seeking to transform our local economy into one which will be based on renewable sources, not fossil fuels.

We wish to address particularly #2 in the Terms of Reference:

funding models and policy measures that capture the full value of existing and emerging industries;

You may be aware that Gladstone's economy is heavily based upon fossil fuels, especially the export of various types of coal and gas. We believe that we can continue to maintain our export industries and economy if we switch to new technologies such as hydrogen created from renewable sources (green hydrogen) which could then be transformed into ammonia for transport, or used locally for manufacturing purposes. Bulk solar electricity is another resource which could be exported in various forms.

As a community, we have a great deal of engineering expertise, and a 'can do' attitude which is an asset to any industry looking to run pilot projects. In addition, we are currently going through an economic slump, and projects such as these will assist to maintain our economy at a reasonable level. Boom and bust does no-one any good, and we have seen the effects of this recently. The process always leaves a town impoverished, and we are seeking a different model which will provide steady employment and a sustainable future.

The Repower Gladstone group recently created a summary of what a 'green' economy for Gladstone would look like. (We excluded tourism because there are already many organisations focussed on that area). The list of ideas is as follows:

Green manufacturing

- Solar panel infrastructure – recognising that China has cornered the market on panels, but we could be assembling modules for installation

Green Hydrogen

- Any hydrogen manufacture in Gladstone must be from renewable sources. Fossil fuel based hydrogen manufacturing will only perpetuate the economic woes of recent years. We have the facilities and personnel to handle dangerous goods, and a large port facility which is capable of sending exporting the resulting product.
- Hydrogen could also be used locally for manufacturing purposes

Electric Vehicle Assembly

- Gladstone could become an export hub for Australian clever design. Electric Vehicles are a rapidly emerging market and we could be at the forefront of this industry as people switch over to electric.

Carbon Farming

- Soil is one of the key ways to store excess carbon – and Gladstone region has large areas of grazing land which would be perfect for large scale regenerative agriculture – storing carbon dioxide and then trading it on the global market.
- While we generally oppose offsets, this would be a genuine case of an uptake of carbon dioxide which could pay handsomely.
- A side benefit of this sort of project would be increased soil fertility and better yields, as well as reduced nutrient runoff to the Great Barrier Reef.

Biochar

- Biochar has many uses in industry as a source of carbon and also in agriculture as a soil conditioner. We present this option with the caveat that we must be careful that any biochar created is from waste streams only and not from healthy forest.

Domestic Solar

- While the Gladstone region does have a high uptake of solar on rooftops, more needs to be done, especially for private rentals and apartment buildings. We believe that even solar hot water (not a new technology) could be very useful to reduce the economic impact that high electricity prices have on those who are vulnerable in our community.

The list is not exhaustive, but we believe that it is a start to creating a leading example of this new economic model with sustainable long term jobs which value our environment and provide a high standard of living for our community.

We are very keen to see some serious support from the Federal Government in this area and are happy to provide more information as required by the Committee.

We want a future for our region filled with good employment, a strong economy and a protected environment.

Yours Sincerely,

Anna Hitchcock

Coordinator

Gladstone Conservation Council