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14 September 2011

House Standing Committee on Regional Australia  
House of Representatives,  
PO Box 6021,  
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

To Whom It May Concern,

As the state's peak business organisation, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland (CCIQ) welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the inquiry into the use 'fly-in, fly-out' (FIFO) and 'drive-in, drive-out' (DIDO) workforce practices in Regional Australia. Representing the interests of 25,000 businesses across Queensland, many of which operate in rural and regional areas, CCIQ recognises the potential impacts of FIFO and DIDO policies on regional economic and population growth.

The Queensland business community is acutely aware that the availability of a strong and productive workforce is central to business success and underpins full employment and economic growth. It is widely acknowledged that skills shortages are particularly acute in regions with significant resource sector projects. Developing, attracting and retaining a skilled workforce in these regions requires strategies that address the people and skills needed by the resource projects directly in addition to those that will be required by support industries and local businesses.

Achieving a balance between the skills needs of the resources sector and the needs of local business, industry and the community is a critical issue for all Queensland's regions. While the FIFO and DIDO workforce provides skilled people for the resource sector, it is essential that the economic and social impacts on the local region are also considered in identifying the proportion of a resource project's workforce that is derived from this initiative.

CCIQ believes that while workers should be encouraged to live locally, the FIFO and DIDO workforce can deliver significant benefits to the regional and State economies. The fluctuating nature of the resources sector has significant impacts on Queensland regions. The boom and bust nature of the sector and the substantial differences in labor market demands across various stages in the lifecycle of resource projects significantly impacts on the cost of living, business viability, housing prices and quality of life for residents. FIFO and DIDO labor can be utilized as mechanism to manage population growth in regions, reducing the impact of the boom and bust, ensuring house price stability, availability of adequate infrastructure and prevent local economies stagnating because of a drop in the number of mine workers living in the town.

People are the key consideration for businesses when considering business expansion or relocation. It is therefore essential that regional planning processes incorporate strategies that will deliver the right people with the right skills at the right time to businesses. Regional and resource project planning processes should incorporate a full assessment of the impact of the FIFO and DIDO workforce on the local economy, infrastructure and services with a view to maximizing the long-term stability of the region and opportunities for investment and local businesses.

Implemented appropriately, the FIFO and DIDO workforce can deliver significant benefits to regional and State economies, local communities and businesses. Achieving the correct balance between FIFO, DIDO and local skilled labour sources will be critical to the development of regional economies and can facilitate an increase in business investment in the region, encourage population growth (including skilled employees), and improvements in and the development of essential infrastructure.

CCIQ is committed to working with all levels of Government to enhance the competitiveness of Queensland's regions. Please contact Elizabeth Roberts  
if you would like to discuss any aspect of this submission.

Yours sincerely

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**Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland**