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2 February 2012

The Secretary Committee
House of Representatives
House Standing Committee on Regional Australia
ra.reps@aph.gov.au

Attention: Siobhan Leyne

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: WHITSUNDAY REGIONAL COUNCIL SUBMISSION – FIFO WORKFORCE PRACTICES IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

I refer to Whitsunday Regional Councils submission in relation to the abovementioned workforce practices in regional Australia. I note that after discussions with Siobhan Leyne, Council's submission, sent on 7 October 2011, was deemed to be correspondence and not a submission by the Committee.

Given this and Council's desire to meet to discuss our concerns with the House Standing Committee, Council Officers are providing a revised submission. I note that the House Standing Committee has granted Council a public hearing on Thursday 23 February 2012, at 12:20pm at the Mackay Entertainment and Convention Centre, Mackay.

Council Officers provide the following information as part of our revised submission:

- FIFO and DIDO are mutually exclusive terms and as such they need to be separately defined for the purpose of this study.
- Incentives need to be provided to employees, through tax reform or incentives provided by mining companies to encourage resource workers to reside in mining communities or regions. For instance, incentives should be provided to employees working in Collinsville to reside either in Collinsville or the greater Whitsunday Regional Council area. Currently, Australian Taxation Office (ATO) provisions (such as Living Away from Home Allowance (LAFHA), encourage or provide incentives for resource workers not to reside in resource communities and promotes them to FIFO or DIDO. This practice does not assist in developing the social fabric of our communities.

Although this is a federal government inquiry, the inquiry should consider the approval process and in particular the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Process in Queensland and where necessary make recommendations for changes to this legislation. For sometime, Council Officers and the community have viewed that the current EIS process in Queensland is tokenistic given that seldom are comments taken into account (by either the community or Council) by the Co-ordinator General.

Secondly, local government have little to no involvement in the implementation or monitoring of conditions and as such, these can sometimes contradict the direction of Council planning. Involvement in the monitoring and implementation of conditions as well as the ability for local government to place reasonable and relevant conditions on EIS approvals would assist in Council developing strong, resilient and sustainable communities. The committee needs to address issues and concerns such as these given that it is the role of the EIS process to establish how employees will be accommodated and the type and nature of accommodation that will be provided.



Consideration is also required to be given to Local Government's becoming legislatively required to be involved in the EIS process, prior to the community consultation phase of the process.

- In order to build strong resilient and sustainable communities, changes are required to the national census that allows data to be captured in relation to the number of non-resident workers that FIFO or DIDO of their primary place of employment. This data would allow for a better allocation of royalties, federal and state government funding and increased service provision (especially social services) to be provided in resource communities.
- Consideration needs to be given to the cumulative impacts of the proposed mining operation for the life of the project (including post decommissioning) and especially in relation to environmental considerations and the provision of hard and soft infrastructure. Cumulative impacts also need to be considered for all potential mines that could develop in the region for the life of the available mineral reserves and deposits.

The cumulative impacts should also consider the multiplier effect of ancillary employment opportunities that are created as a result of the mining operation and the challenges that this creates for housing and in particular affordable housing for non-mining workforces (such as teachers, emergency service workers, nurses and the like).

- Consideration needs to be given to companies that employ FIFO or DIDO employees to provide a strategy to transition FIFO workers to permanent residents within the resource region that they work.
- Consideration should be given to initiatives that strengthen regional coastal communities via FIFO employees.
- Whitsunday Regional Council has three (3) aviation assets in the region; Proserpine, Collinsville and Bowen. These three (3) aviation facilities will experience considerable growth on an in bound basis during the construction phase of mining operations. Our hope is that once the construction phase is completed construction workforces will move into operational workforces and this is where Council requires connections to the Galilee Basin (e.g. Proserpine to Alpha return).

These three (3) aviation facilities have the ability to specifically cater for FIFO workforces.

- It is Council's vision that a legacy of the mining companies will be an upgrade of the Bowen and Collinsville aviation facilities being brought up to a high standard during the construction phase of mining operations.

Should you wish to discuss any of the abovementioned issues in further detail please do not hesitate to contact me on the abovementioned number or _____

Yours faithfully

Amanda Pugh
A/g Principal Strategic Planner