



***House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Regional Australia
Inquiry into the use of 'fly-in, fly-out' (FIFO) workforce practices
in regional Australia
Public Hearing Tuesday 21 February 2012, 9am-1:30pm***

- The Cairns Regional Council's presentation builds upon and endorses the wider regional submission presented to the hearing by Advance Cairns.
- The Cairns Regional Council (Council) will work to adopt a 'win-win' solution through a holistic approach that supports families, workers, mining companies, and regional/remote communities.
- Over a long period, the Cairns/Far North Queensland population, economy and workforce has been the fastest growing in northern Australia and is now the largest in population and workforce in northern Australia.
- The resource sector including FIFO/DIDO workers are an important established component of the economy of Cairns. Continued growth of this sector will assist broaden the region's narrow economic base and diversify the economy;
 - FNQ currently has the highest unemployment rate (8.8%) of any statistical region in Australia;
 - It is estimated that in 2010 that there were over 2,000 FIFO workers based in the region;
 - Value of Mining to the FNQ region is estimated to be \$900M (09/10);
 - The region has a history of supporting FIFO/DIDO operations, being a base for government services, mining (incl. PNG), construction and defence;
 - A very long history of supporting mining operations - Cairns was founded in 1876 as a mining port to service hinterland mineral fields and more recently Rio Tinto Aluminium Weipa since the late 1950's, Cape Flattery Silica Mines since 1967 and Freeport Indonesia for over 20 years.
- Cairns is a lifestyle destination which has the necessary infrastructure (international airport/seaport), health, community and education services to support FIFO/DIDO workers and their families;
 - Affordable living costs add to the region's attractiveness for FIFO/DIDO workers and their families with lower weekly rents and median house prices;
 - Cairns has air services to 18 mining centres;
 - Recently refurbished Domestic Terminal and an International Terminal refurbishment project underway;
 - Cairns Base Hospital upgrade underway;
 - World class education facilities including James Cook University and the Tropical North Queensland Institute TAFE and extensive Registered Training Organisation's experienced in the resource sector;
 - The region boasts some of the best sporting facilities in the country and hosts international and national sporting teams;

- Strong sense of community in Cairns, as a result of location, cultural diversity, sustainability, engagement, service delivery and infrastructure; and
- The Cairns community is very supportive of FIFO/DIDO workers and their families.
- Council will work in partnership with the resource industry, key stakeholders and relevant Government agencies to connect FIFO/DIDO workers and their families with existing community networks. Council has a proven track record with this approach, partnering with the Australian Defence Force and proposes that a similar approach be replicated for FIFO/DIDO families;
 - Council supports the need to monitor the impacts and opportunities for the region on FIFO/DIDO operations.
- Council supports the need to ensure appropriate training and associated infrastructure is established in Cairns to cater for skills demand and minimise skills leakage/drift away from existing industries;
 - Encourage mining companies to have a greater percentage of trainees and apprentices in their workforce;
 - The Cairns region has a track record of industry partnering with Government to establish successful training facilities which support key sectors and Council encourages investment by the resource industry in similar facilities—Cairns Aviation Skills Centre, and the Great Barrier Reef International Marine College;
 - Council supports the efforts of the FNQ Industry Workforce Development group on developing strategies to expand the skilled labour pool;
 - Council supports training and career pathway planning as an integral HR practice. This will ensure that resource sector workers have transferable and relevant skills that facilitate their transition to alternative employment.
- There is an existing FIFO Pilot Project Coordinator (first in Australia) based in Cairns working with mining companies and the local community. Council proposes that this role could be broadened and provided with additional resources to establish a 'FIFO Centre of Excellence' in Cairns. This hub would then become the point of contact for all matters relating to FIFO/DIDO as well as providing and coordinating resources for workers and their families.
- Council strongly encourages mining companies and contractors to review existing roster arrangements to ascertain whether there is scope to introduce shorter, more balanced rosters to allow for more family time and better work life balance for FIFO/DIDO workers.
- The Cairns region has a high indigenous population and Council believes FIFO/DIDO will provide opportunities for indigenous employment and economic development.
- Council recognises the importance of resource companies investing in infrastructure and services in both the location of the operation and the location of the workforce.
- Cairns Regional Council will aim to adopt a 'best practice' approach based on current initiatives as well as input from key stakeholders that will support FIFO/DIDO workers and their families, mining companies, existing industries and all affected communities.