



FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES 2019

Projects to create jobs and enable growth of Hinchinbrook Shire's economic potential in agriculture, tourism, recreation and cultural platforms, supporting the Australian Government's Agenda for Northern Australia - the gateway to global markets and prosperity of the North.

Forward

The demographic and economic challenges confronting our district are huge, but not insurmountable. We have a declining and ageing population because we cannot hold our youth. We have limited jobs or job prospects to hold or attract youth. Our district holds the current record for being the oldest demographic in the State. The 2016 census recorded a median age of 50 years for the Hinchinbrook Shire. The median age for Queensland is 37 and for Australia it was 38.

In 1996 our population was 15,800. We had other industries such as forestry and some trawlers operating out of Dungeness. Fast forward to 2016 and our population is 10,800. There is no more forestry and no more trawlers.

With the exception of jobs in manufacturing and health care sector, there is no other industry in our district that can offer the jobs that we need to retain our youth, arrest our population decline and ensure sustainability of our community.

Our major industry is the sugar cane industry. We are good at growing cane, probably too good at it when you look at the efficiencies being achieved. In 1996 we had approximately 100 harvesters running around with a three man crew. Now we have 50 harvesters running around with essentially a three man crew.

There is 150 jobs gone in the harvesting sector alone. As machinery gets bigger and new technology, such as better herbicides for grass control comes along for instance, the demand for jobs in the field gets less and less. We now have the mill looking at going to single man train operations. How many jobs will that take out.

The projects we submit for consideration will create the jobs we need to turn our situation around.

We are grateful for your support.

Yours sincerely

Ramon Jayo
Mayor

Hinchinbrook Shire Council is seeking Federal Government support towards key projects enabling job creation and economic stimulus in the Hinchinbrook Shire by funding:

- Access improvement works at Dungeness;
- The Business Case for ramp and jetty facilities at Forrest Beach;
- Heated agricultural product silo storage facilities;
- A formal commitment towards the North Queensland Bio-Energy Project;
- The Business Case for the Herbert River Weir Project to enhance tourism and agriculture;
- Dutton Street Bridge Flood Resilience Construction;
- Restoration of Financial Assistance Grants; and
- Dungeness Boat Ramp Car Park Extension.

Dungeness Marine Access Improvement Project

Hinchinbrook Shire Council is proposing to increase the accessibility of the Enterprise Channel at Dungeness in order to attain all-tide access and safe passage for boating vessels. Restricted tidal access is constraining Hinchinbrook Shire Council's ability to develop tourism as an economic stimulus for the region given the inability to operate commercial tourism from a tide book. With the Great Barrier Reef and the pristine Hinchinbrook and Palm Islands close nearby, better marine access is required to capitalise on this industry opportunity. This is to be achieved by re-establishing the existing navigable channel through capital and maintenance dredging. Subsequently, Council is also proposing to construct a rock wall adjacent to the channel to ensure it remains accessible.

The dredged material is to be utilised for beach replenishment purposes on the adjacent foreshore to protect the remaining spit from further erosion, which in time, should no action be taken, will threaten neighbouring marine infrastructure (i.e. boat ramp, floating pontoon, fishing wharf) and other commercial enterprises located southward of the spit that are vital to Hinchinbrook's tourism industry.

The proposed works, detailed above, are subject to receiving the necessary development approvals.

Development Applications are in process for the following:

1. Rock Wall Construction approximately 400m long \$8,000,000 ex GST; and
2. Channel Dredging and Beach Replenishment works to create a 50m wide channel estimate 15,000m³ dredge spoil \$950,000 ex GST per dredging cycle.

Recommendation

Federal Government to provide \$950K in funding to assist dredging and beach replenishment, including a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement at Dungeness to facilitate development of tourism in the area.

New Boat Ramp/Jetty Facilities at Forrest Beach

As indicated above, there are limitations to accessing marine waters in the region, including access restrictions at low tide, with limited to no access for small shallow draft vessels and a lack of all-tidal marine access facilities within reasonable proximity to the Hinchinbrook region.

Marine access is limited to casual recreational purposes (tide dependent), with the exception of the jetty, operated by Queensland Sugar Limited. There is also an inadequate ability to provide safe and efficient marine access for people and goods within the region, including access to Palm and Orpheus Islands and access for Maritime Safety Queensland vessels, a major concern in emergency situations.

Recommendation

Federal Government to provide \$750K in funding to undertake the business case, including comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement for the establishment of ramp and jetty facilities at Forrest Beach.

Heated Silo Storage Facilities

Due to the cyclical nature of world sugar pricing, alternate cropping industries must be established with a view to breaking sugar cane monoculture and introducing complimentary cropping to counter yield decline through soil improvement. Current trials in dry land of rice and legumes are occurring. Identified constraints are lack of agronomy services to teach and instil knowledge and expertise in farmers; and lack of bulk storage facilities to improve transport efficiencies to market further south.

This project will encourage and promote diversification in agriculture, complementary to sugar cane production, by value-adding during crop rotational/ fallow cycles, utilising dryland rice cropping and legumes.

A lack of suitable storage facilities is impacting transport costs as smaller truck loads need to travel between Hinchinbrook and Burdekin. Efficiencies and improved profitability can be achieved through increased storage capacity, enabling individual farmers the ability to drop loads at a local depot for collection by bigger units when appropriate quantities have accumulated.

Recommendation

Federal Government to provide \$750K in funding towards heated silo storage facilities for pulse, rice and comparable grain production.

Bio Precincts – North Queensland Bio-Energy (NQBE) Project – Ingham

Ingham has had a declining population since 2003 and the Hinchinbrook Shire Council and community are committed to diversifying to grow their economy and population which will save the town jobs, small businesses and families who depend on the sugar industry.

NQBE was incorporated by the growers to diversify the way they conduct their business and not only be sustainable into the future, but grow jobs and the economy. It is envisaged this will be the start of a bio precinct in Hinchinbrook Shire.

The NQBE Project has existing State and Federal Development Approvals in place and will deliver a net increase of:

- 253 “new” jobs to the region (not including an additional 114 truck drivers required to transport the cane to the facility);
- \$96m per annum in regional output;
- \$68m per annum in regional value added; and
- \$19m per annum in regional income.

Hinchinbrook Shire Council supports NQBE as an emerging renewable energy industry for the region and will support application under the Federal Government's Regional Growth Fund on the basis it would be matched by contributions from NQBE and its members over time and ancillary assistance from Council in accord with existing town planning/development approvals.

Recommendation

Federal Government to provide financial assistance towards the NQBE Renewable Energy Facility. The project is shovel ready.

Herbert River Weir Project

Q2100 predictions suggest tidal rises equalling 0.8 metres by 2100. Rises of this nature will compromise town water supply operations, given potential for salt water intrusion at Fairford Road water intakes.

Advancement of salt water to that extent can be stopped by construction of a weir. Supplementary uses of a weir include possible tourism recreation in the form of skiing and boating and irrigation area to support alternate

cropping opportunities due to existing natural falls away from the river supporting unassisted water movement opportunities.

An in-stream weir facility within the Herbert River will seek to protect salt water intrusion of fresh water supplies, whilst increasing the opportunity for irrigated horticulture, complementary to sugar cane production, by availability of supplementary irrigation. In addition, it will also increase recreational opportunities for fishing, water sports and tourism adjacent to the township of Ingham.

Recommendation

Federal Government to provide \$450K in funding towards a business case, including comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement for the establishment of an in-stream weir facility within the Herbert River.

Dungeness Boat Ramp Car Park Extension

The provision of adequate and safe facilities for boat users is a priority for Council and the Hinchinbrook community. This project value adds to recently completed pontoon upgrades at the Dungeness Boat Ramp which is no longer regarded as local ramp, but rather, a ramp of regional significance given the utilisation by boaties from the adjoining areas of Townsville and Cassowary Coast, due to the all weather boating opportunities offered by the Hinchinbrook Channel.

This project has the capacity to triple current capacity by approximately 190 bays. The much-needed car park expansion hopes to reduce current vehicle congestion, as well as allowing for an increasing demand on boating facilities and future growth in the area. Improved marine access at Dungeness is crucial for meeting existing and future demands for tourism, commercial and recreational boating in Hinchinbrook and is an important contributor to the local economy.

Hinchinbrook Shire Council's proposed works involve the clearing of vegetation in road reserve maintained by Council in Kangaroo Street to extend the existing boat ramp car park at Dungeness to cater for an increase in recreational vehicles utilising the upgraded boat ramp facility.

Recommendation

Federal Government to provide \$835,500 ex GST. The project is shovel ready.

Restoration of Financial Assistance Grants

Restoration of the Financial Assistance Grants to one (1) percent and indexed to relevant indexes will assist Council to maintain assets and infrastructure benefiting the local community through additional services and facilities. Additional funding assists with dealing with the real challenges and opportunities facing this community, however decreased grants compounds the issues Council is already facing, such as the ageing population, population decline and struggling cane industry.

Recommendation

Federal Government restore Financial Assistance Grants to at least 1 percent.

Dutton Street Bridge Construction

The flooding of Ingham and other townships within the Hinchinbrook Shire is well known and documented. Since 1995, there have been at least 11 notable flood events (BOM 2015) that have occurred within the Hinchinbrook region. This equates to a flood disruption every 2 years on average.

During flood events, water from the Herbert River overflows into Palm Creek and causes inundation of all roads that cross Palm Creek. This results in north and south Ingham being divided by Palm Creek and prevents residents accessing emergency services, hospital and other critical care facilities and vice-versa.

Hinchinbrook Shire Council has successfully secured funding from the Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning (SDMIP) to proceed with the planning and design works of the new Dutton Street Bridge.

\$8,000,000 ex GST – Project will be shovel ready following the completion of the Maturing the Infrastructure Pipeline Program (MIPP) Round 2 Early 2020.

Recommendation

Federal Government to provide funding for the construction of a bridge over Dutton Street to build community resilience during flood and to mitigate future emergency service costings due to the need for additional resourcing.