



Inland Queensland Roads Action Plan

*Driving Productivity
in Australia's Transport Network*

26 May 2017

Committee Secretary
Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000
E: ipnrc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

Re: Inquiry into long-term sustainability of local government

I refer to the call for submissions regarding an inquiry into the long-term sustainability of local government under section 94 of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 and welcome the opportunity to make this submission to the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee inquiry. While my comments do relate to asset management plans, infrastructure asset investment and financial sustainability, I wish to raise another matter which provides an example of opportunities for State Government planning, programming and funding to support local government sustainability.

As Chair of the Inland Queensland Roads Action Plan (IQ-RAP) project I write to you to explain the importance of the certainty of long-term road funding to the sustainability of rural and remote local governments.

In much of rural Queensland, local governments rely heavily on roads funding for the sustainability of their council operations. In many cases road funding makes up well over 50% of the annual budget.

In August 2013 as the Mayor of Boulia Shire and a Member of the Regional Development Australia Townsville and North West Queensland Committee, I raised the issue of the importance of road funding to local governments' operations and sustainability, the issue of uncertainty of long-term road funding and the associated negative impacts on planning for staff recruitment, retention and training and investment into supply chains such as quarries for road base.

Furthermore we discussed the broader economic and social impacts of the costs to local communities if council staff, local contractors or suppliers need to be let go due to funding uncertainty. If for example five jobs were cut, and five families left a small town in remote Queensland, there would more than likely be a negative spiralling affect with teacher, police, health and other service delivery staff being cut too with their families then leaving town as well.

Recognising the issues and the urgency to address them, 33 local governments covering 82% of Queensland have collaborated with their Regional Roads and Transport Groups, five Regional Development Australian committees and RACQ to develop the IQ-RAP as a recommendation for future long term road programming and funding to provide more certainty to local governments in planning budgets, workforce, skills development and financial commitments for heavy equipment.

The premise of the IQ-RAP is that with longer term, strategic, collaborative planning, much more can be achieved through road programming and funding to deliver wider economic and social benefits to communities and Queensland as a whole.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads' (TMR) Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program (QTRIP) is a good program – with two years confirmed funding and two years tentative funding, however, it does not guarantee funding to every local government every year and there is no indication of funding beyond the four year period.

The Department of Infrastructure and Local Government's State Infrastructure Plan is a good longer term planning document stretching out to 15 years.

IQ-RAP helps bridge the four and 15 year planning gap and supports the requirement for local governments to develop 10 year asset management plans.

As per the LGAQ Policy Statement 2015 “ State and Federal Governments should recognise the need for local government to have adequate notice of future road funding allocations to facilitate effective and efficient programming.”

The vision for the Inland Queensland Roads Action Plan (IQ-RAP) is to increase the quality and accessibility of the road network to maximise the economic prosperity of inland Queensland, thereby contributing to Australia's productivity, quality of life, safety and equity outcomes.

The IQ-RAP provides a methodology that can be used to monitor the road and bridge infrastructure gaps and review priorities. It analyses existing data on bridge and road conditions against TMR intervention and vision standards, and prioritises investment based on:

- Economic value – Supports economic activity across all industries, and is able to carry heavy freight efficiently in most weather conditions with enhanced safety levels for all users;
- Strategic intent – Provides stimulus to future economic development;
- Safety – Carries traffic safely;
- Access – Ensures roads within the network are of a consistent and adequate quality with predictable travel conditions; and
- Social value – Connects communities for education, health, employment, business and recreation.

Multi Criteria Analysis (MCA) based on the above criteria ensured a robust and objective prioritisation process with resulting recommendations for works in three categories: MCA rating 1 – highest priority for delivery in 0-5 years, MCA rating 2 – priority for delivery in 6-10 years, MCA rating 3 – priority for delivery in 11-15+ years.

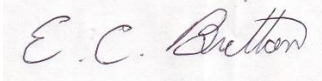
The MCA has identified over 3,000 kilometres of road and approximately 300 bridges require upgrades to meet 'fit for purpose' standards. An average investment of \$277 million per annum, approximately 0.2% of Queensland's Gross State Product generated outside Brisbane, would address each of these priorities and deliver the desired outcomes:

- Local on-going jobs in road planning, design, construction, maintenance;
- Productivity improvements for all industries and business users of the road network eg mining, agriculture;
- Opening up of new tourism routes and associated increases in private investment into existing and new businesses;
- Safer roads with fewer accidents, fatalities and injuries; and
- More resilient connectivity of communities for delivery of services and goods and access in times of severe weather events and emergencies.

On behalf of the IQ-RAP Working Group and funding partners and the communities we serve, I encourage you to consider the way in which the State Government can utilise existing portfolio management to deliver programming and funding that will enhance financial sustainability of councils and the viability of their local communities.

Please refer to www.rdanwq.org.au/ig-rap for further details. I would be delighted to respond to any further questions you may have. I recommend contact through the IQ-RAP Secretariat which is managed by Ms Glenys Schuntner, CEO at RDA Townsville and North West Queensland - on 07 4410 3655; 0417 198 284 or ceo@rdanwq.org.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "E. C. Britton". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Cr Eric (Rick) Britton
Chair
IQ-RAP Working Group