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Queensland Renewable Energy Expert Panel  
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Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Submission to the 'Credible pathways to a 50% renewable energy target for Queensland' Draft Report

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission in response to the Queensland Renewable Energy Expert Panel's Draft Report. The Regional Development Australia Townsville and North West Queensland (RDA) Committee recognises efficient electricity supply and competitive pricing now and into the future as critical issues for our region. As an economic development focussed organisation, we are keen to be a participating and contributing stakeholder in the development of Queensland's energy strategy. We have to date attended consultation workshops in Mount Isa and Cairns and look forward to on-going engagement.

RDA works across the 15 local government areas in north and north-west Queensland, an area that covers nearly 26% of Queensland. As a not-for-profit funded by the Australian Government, we engage with all three levels of government and community representatives and know from first-hand experience that energy issues are top of mind for businesses and residents.

RDA has developed and regularly updates a Regional Roadmap which articulates regional priorities to be addressed and the strategies that can be undertaken to achieve outcomes. RDA works with partners across the region to progress prioritised initiatives and projects. (Refer to <http://www.rdatanwq.org.au/regional-roadmap>)

### General Comments

The RDA's 2015-2018 Townsville and North West Regional Roadmap places a high priority on the need for investment into energy infrastructure, and in particular electricity generation and transmission including renewable generation for the region. This priority has arisen in response to the following identified challenges for the region:

- Electricity pricing for major industries such as irrigated agriculture and minerals processing has risen steeply and is providing significant challenges to maintain global competitiveness in export markets;
- Electricity supply is mainly reliant on generation outside the region;
- Electricity supply is not integrated across the region; rather there are a number of distribution systems;
- Some remote areas of the region are reliant on costly, high emission releasing and unreliable supply by diesel fuel; and
- Whilst there has been some uptake of renewable electricity sources, there are constraints to their further development. These constraints include:
  - Regulatory issues regarding transmission and connection to the grid;
  - Lack of clarity on land planning, native title, land tenure and environmental noise and visual impacts; and
  - Viability in servicing a decentralised population cost effectively and reliably.



RDA supports the Panel's approach of identifying short-term – pre 2020 and longer term pathways - post 2020 and encourages the Queensland Government to take a strategic whole-of-state approach that ensures economic, social and environmental benefits across the state. This will require a long-term strategy, policy and regulatory frameworks to be in place to enable the market to move swiftly to deliver the increase in renewables the state needs to achieve the proposed, or any alternate, renewable energy targets.

As identified in the Draft Report, a robust and thriving renewable energy sector has potential to deliver economic, social and employment opportunities. While the Draft Report makes assessments of perceived economic benefits and impacts on future energy pricing, the detailed modelling on these calculations have not been made available to date. We recommend that peer review and publication of these models and assessments will build confidence and community support in future planning.

Regional Queensland, and in particular the Townsville and North West Queensland Region, can be powerful players in the development and implementation of the renewable energy strategy and in particular in developing centres of excellence around renewable energy hubs. Given Queensland's unique position in having a highly distributed population and industry base, regional Queensland provides significant opportunities for positioning generation and supply chains close to regional hubs of populations from 20,000 to 185,000 and current and future energy intensive industries. For example, in the Townsville and North West Queensland region, there are mines and minerals processing users of energy, but a key growth strategy is the development of more value-adding to the large agricultural base.

Industries that are significant tax contributors to governments (and through them to education, health and social services) and regional employment must be considered carefully in how new strategies and policies will have an impact. The state is currently experiencing high unemployment and negative social impacts in many regions. Communities will demand there is a net gain of economic, social and environmental outcomes from the strategies and implementation of renewable energy targets. Transition planning will be essential for existing industries to cope with any potential impacts from government policy and support must be offered.

To attract new investments into renewable generation, technology and research and development, it will be important that the Government has strong linkages to local governments, economic development and business organisations, universities and the private research sector to ensure a seamless process for investors. Specialist investment staff will be required in Trade and Invest Queensland and the Department of State Development.

Likewise close engagement with universities, vocational education providers and secondary schools will be essential to maximise the development of appropriate skills and also develop export education opportunities in the sector.

While the role of the renewable energy target is to commercialise the least-cost renewable energy technologies, the development of a credible renewable energy pathway for Queensland will provide opportunities for emerging technologies through research, development and the deployment cycle would not only ensure a diversified clean energy mix but will deliver a range of benefits to communities in Queensland from investment in niche technology to expand employment opportunities.

I wish to thank you for this opportunity to make a submission and once again congratulate you on addressing our need to diversify our energy supply to ensure greater, resilient communities across Queensland. I will be happy to provide any further information required or to answer any questions you may have and can be reached on 07 4410 3655 or at [ceo@rdanwq.org.au](mailto:ceo@rdanwq.org.au). My RDA Committee and I look forward to further engagement in reaching the 50% renewable energy target.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Woodhouse', written over a horizontal line.

**Paul Woodhouse**  
Chairman