

NWQROC STATEMENT

13 June 2019

State Budget paves the way for some good news, but falls short of a fair deal for NWQ

Leaders from North West Queensland have welcomed some good news from the 2019 State Budget but point out the shortfall in fair investment that the state's powerhouse north west region deserves.

The nine mayors of the collective councils of North West Queensland (NWQROC) have welcomed State Budget commitments that benefit the region and commend the Queensland Government for its support and approach to working with locals following the unprecedented flooding events earlier this year.

We saw what could be done when government stepped outside the south east and worked with local communities, developing a positive way forward and one that produces better outcomes across our large and diverse region.

We need this approach and targeted investment to continue, and as the State Election approaches next year we will be calling on political representatives on all sides to step up to deliver on the commitment our region deserves.

North West Queensland is critical to the economic success of the state and can't continue to sustain its contribution with a scattered, token investment from other levels of government.

Our region punches well above its weight with each hardworking local contributing \$176,000 per capita to the national economy - almost three times that of elsewhere in Queensland. To keep this momentum going, we need fair funding in our priority areas of roads, power, water infrastructure, telecommunications and sound policy frameworks to support local populations and business.

The Budget does offer some good news for our region including key investments across our priority areas with transport infrastructure the standout this year.

Most notable is the investment in the Townsville to Mount Isa Rail Line which provides a vital link for North West industry through to our neighbours on the coast in Townsville. We directly raised the issue of funding with Deputy Premier Trad last year and are pleased to note that our concerns have been met with a \$87.7 million commitment. Together with the construction of a new terminal at the Port of Townsville, the efficient movement of freight has certainly been bolstered by these commitments in the State Budget. The missing link now for the North West is of course the expansion of the Port of Karumba.

In addition to rail and ports, the North West will see some welcome investment in its critical roads network including targeted funding of \$3 million to seal sections of the Cloncurry to Dajarra Road; \$12 million for the Queensland section of Savannah Way; \$11.3 million to pave and seal the remaining unsealed sections of the Hann Highway, and \$4.8 million to upgrade nine intersections of the Barkly Highway (Cloncurry to Mount Isa).

We also note and welcome the Queensland Government's commitment to work with the Australian Government to develop better inland freight routes, with \$50 million committed towards Townsville to Tennant Creek corridor upgrades, and \$25 million towards Townsville to Roma corridor upgrades.

As leaders in our communities we continue to advocate for measures that will support and grow sustainable populations and business in our region as part of NWQROC's Six-Point Strategic Plan for the future. This Budget includes \$885 million of targeted payroll tax initiatives which goes some way to address the need to support local business and ultimately help create jobs.



Other Budget commitments of note include ongoing and new funding for natural disaster assistance including \$50 million for the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme, and a boost to the North West Health Board budget of \$80 million, going from \$702 million to \$782million.

Infrastructure development is a key focus for the North West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils and whilst additional funding announced yesterday for programs such as Building our Regions and the Jobs and Regional Growth Fund are very welcome, we will be advocating hard to ensure other important infrastructure and job creating programs such as Works for Queensland, the Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme and the Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program receive increased funding in order to support the further development of North West Queensland communities.

Download NWQROC Six-point Plan at: www.nwqroc.com.au/fairregionaldeal/

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