

## NWQROC MEDIA RELEASE

8 September 2023

### We're Ready to Transform Our Region – But first... THE STATE GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO GO BACK TO BASICS

Leaders from across Queensland's North West are calling on the State Government to go back to basics as it develops a Regional Transformation Strategy and Implementation Plan for the region.

Meeting this week in Mount Isa as part of the North West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (NWQROC), the 10 mayors from across the region have a clear message for the State Government: *put basic infrastructure up the priority list if you want to realise the true potential, and grow the powerhouse, that is North West Queensland.*

Mayor Jack Bawden, NWQROC Chair, said that while plans to invest in and grow the region are welcome, improvements to basic, supporting infrastructure such as roads, water supply, housing, electricity and connectivity needed higher priority.

"We're at the ready to make sure our region is in the best position to take advantage of the development of Northern Australia. We have the research, as well as generations of experience up here, that shows it's the essential infrastructure that is the linchpin to success," he said.

"It's simple. This basic infrastructure just has to be there if we truly want to make a success of growing the region and major investments like solar and wind renewable energy projects and the Copperstring transmission line from Townsville to Mount Isa."

While welcoming the State Government's Energy and Jobs Plan, the councils stressed the need for projects being considered under the \$200 million Regional Economic Futures Fund, \$40 million of which is earmarked for the North West, to give higher priority to the fundamental need for improved roads, water supply, electricity, housing and connectivity.

"This will not only support the development and rollout of the renewable energy projects but equally support the growth of agriculture and tourism, vital industries across the region," Mayor Bawden said.

"A rising tide floats all boats and it's enabling infrastructure that will raise the tide for all industry, businesses and communities across the North West"

"We also know that whatever benefits the North West, flows to the State. Punching well above our weight, North West Queensland contributes three (3) times more per capita to the State economy than any other region. Imagine what we can do with just securing the basics to not only grow our communities and business, but also deliver these game-changing projects."

"From here the NWQROC, on behalf of our 11 member councils, has started developing its *Enabling Infrastructure Plan* for North West Queensland. This plan will provide the basis for our ongoing advocacy to the State and Federal Governments and our 2024 State Election Platform."

"We look forward to continuing to work with all levels of government to unlock the potential and grow North West Queensland," Mayor Bawden said.

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## About the AEC Group Research

The Councils' position has been supported by research undertaken by the AEC Group, Townsville-based economic and finance consultants. The company recently undertook economic profiling of the regions across Northern Australia for the Developing Northern Australia Conference in Darwin in July 2023. This report provides baseline quantitative data to focus the combined efforts of government, industry and community on the areas of either most need or most opportunity.

The NWQROC has endorsed the report and its evidence-based recommendations which call for a back to basics approach to growing resident population through investing in quality urban infrastructure including housing and liveability services to attract and retain workers; supporting private investment by lowering the cost of doing business – electricity, transport and insurance; through increased government spending on catalytic infrastructure including dams, transport and energy networks; and increasing the value of exports.

The report calls for the development of place-based development plans to include a clear assessment of each regions' opportunities and challenges and the infrastructure, investment and policy change required to realise their opportunities.



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