

DATE Friday, 28 January 2022

TO: Cr Peter Scott, Mayor Cook Shire Council

SUBJECT LGAQ Policy Executive Update for Far North Queensland Regional
 Organisation of Councils Meeting – Thursday 3rd February 2022

Key Activities Summary

This brief provides an update on the following key LGAQ activities:

- 1. *Policy Executive meeting update***
- 2. *Post conference update and Advocacy Action Plan***
- 3. *Crime and Corruption Commission***
- 4. *Upcoming Federal Election Advocacy update***
- 5. *Increased Finance Assistance Grants Funding***
- 6. *Inquiry into the Office of Independent Assessor (OIA)***
- 7. *Queensland Resource Industry Development Plan – draft released***
- 8. *Housing Update***
- 9. *Waste Update***
- 10. *Rural & Remote Councils Compact***
- 11. *Goondiwindi Regional Council v Tait***
- 12. *2022 ROC Assembly***
- 13. *Water and Wastewater Update***
- 14. *Natural Resources and Environment Update***
- 15. *Covid – Workforce Update***
- 16. *LGAQ Submissions Update***

1. Policy Executive meeting update

- The final Policy Executive meeting for 2021 was held on Friday 10 December 2021 at LG House in Brisbane.
- Items discussed by the PE included:
 - COVID-19 update
 - Federal Election Campaign
 - Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee Inquiry
 - Advocacy Action Plan
 - Waste Levy
 - Local Government Housing Action Plan Update
 - Minutes from the December PE meeting can be found on Congruent [here](#)
 - The first PE meeting for 2022 is scheduled for Friday 11 February 2022, if you have any issues to raise as a Policy Executive level, please contact your district 10 Far North PE representative Cr Peter Scott.

LGAQ Lead Contact for this matter: Cory Heathwood, Head of Advocacy

2. Post conference update and Advocacy Action Plan

- The LGAQ held a successful annual conference in October 2021, with more than 100 motions passed
- All resolutions are available on [Congruent here](#)
- The conference final outcomes document is [located here](#)
- The LGAQ has written to the relevant State and Federal Ministers to advocate for the motions passed and is working cooperatively with both levels of government on achieving them
- The Advocacy Action Plan (AAP) is currently being prepared and will be distributed to LGAQ members at the end of February 2022.

LGAQ Lead Contact for this matter: Nicole Lessio – Lead Intergovernmental Relations

3. Crime and Corruption Commission

- The LGAQ has welcomed the recent resignation of Crime and Corruption Commission (CCC) Chair, Alan MacSporran QC.
- This resignation came on the back of the 20 January withdrawal of charges laid by the CCC against former Moreton Bay Regional Council Mayor Allan Sutherland.
- It also followed a damning report late last year from the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee (PCCC), into the failed prosecutions of seven former Logan City Councillors following a lengthy Inquiry.
- Following the withdrawal of fraud charges against the seven former Logan councillors, the LGAQ called for an Inquiry, compensation and a public apology for those impacted, as well as changes to the CCC to ensure it never happens again.
- The State Government will consider the PCCC Inquiry's report before the Queensland Parliament resumes on 22 February.
- The LGAQ will continue to reiterate the need for the recommendations from the PCCC Inquiry's report to be implemented and for an independent acting Chair to be installed while the recruitment of a new Chairperson takes place.

LGAQ Lead Contact for this matter: Sarah Vogler, External Relations Director

4. Upcoming Federal Election Advocacy update

- The LGAQ is finalising our Federal Budget Submission – to be sent to the Federal government at the end of January.
- Our submission focuses on the themes of liveability and sustainability with increases to Financial Assistance Grants and funding for roads, infrastructure, housing and disaster mitigation the priorities
- The Federal Election can be held *no later* than the 21st of May 2022. 33 days are required between the issue of the writ and polling day – which would mean the latest it would be called is the 17th of April (although it can be as long as 68 days after Parliament is dissolved – 13th March).
- May is firming as the expected month for the election with Sportsbet having a May election date at \$1.05 (so 7th, 14th or 21st of May) April at \$9.00 and March at \$12.00. With holidays and Easter (and COVID) in the mix – May is most likely.
- The LGAQ is in the process of finalising its Federal Election campaign collateral.
- ALGA released their election asks, with their campaign focus of ‘Don’t leave local communities behind’ – you can [find their election priorities here](#). The LGAQ’s campaign dovetails with ALGA’s to amplify the voices of local government.

LGAQ Lead Contact for this matter: Nicole Lessio – Lead Intergovernmental Relations

5. Increased Finance Assistance Grants Funding

- There has been a direct advocacy request to the Federal Government regarding an overall increase to the Financial Assistance Grants funding pool, in line with ALGA and the LGAQ’s advocacy on restoring Financial Assistance Grants to at least one per cent of Commonwealth taxation revenue. Representations included a meeting with the Federal Local Government Assistant Minister and Deputy Prime Minister’s chief of staff on 23 December 2021 and ongoing discussions with their respective offices.

LGAQ Lead Contact for this matter: Cory Heathwood, Head of Advocacy

6. Inquiry into the Office of Independent Assessor (OIA)

- Thank you to those individual councillors and councils who assisted the LGAQ in making a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Office of Independent Assessor (OIA), being undertaken by the State Development and Regional Industries Parliamentary Committee (the Committee).
- A copy of the LGAQ’s submission to the Committee can be found [here](#).
- A total of 58 submissions were lodged with the Committee, with a link to those submissions available [here](#).
- As background, following correspondence from the LGAQ to the Deputy Premier Steven Miles MP, the Committee resolved to inquire into and report to the Legislative Assembly on the functions of the Independent Assessor and the performance of those functions, in particular:
 - whether the performance by the Independent Assessor of the Independent Assessor’s functions is consistent with the intent of the local government complaints system,
 - whether the powers and resources of the Independent Assessor are being applied in accordance with the public interest, and
 - any amendments to the Local Government Act 2009 or changes to the functions, structures or procedures of the Independent Assessor that the committee considers desirable for the more effective operation of the Independent Assessor and/or the local government complaints system.

- The Deputy Premier's correspondence to the Committee, which includes the LGAQ correspondence can be found [here](#).
- LGAQ CEO Alison Smith appeared before the Committee on 6 December 2021 to provide background information on the concerns of the local government sector, and further Committee hearings are planned for the coming weeks including in regional communities.

LGAQ Lead Contact for this matter: Sarah Vogler – External Relations Director

7. Queensland Resource Industry Development Plan – draft released

- The Department of Resources has released the draft Queensland Resource Industry Development Plan, a 30-year vision for our resources industry to be 'a resilient, responsible and sustainable resources industry that grows and transforms'.
- The draft plan was released on 24 November, and consultations are now over. Feedback can still be submitted to the Department via their website, with a closing date of 11 February 2022 for feedback. Details can be found on LGAQ congruent - [here](#).
- Councils are encouraged to submit their feedback to the Department and attend the LGAQ session to coordinate feedback with other councils.
- The release of the plan coincided with a moratorium on mining claims – while the Department seeks feedback on the management of small-claims mining. Details can be found on LGAQ congruent - [here](#). The Department is looking to expedite changes quickly in this area.
- The draft plan has 43 actions and can be found - [here](#). Following consultation, the final plan will be released in mid-2022 and is an election commitment from the Palaszczuk Government.
- There is a strong focus on encouraging new economy minerals, and opportunities for Councils in the placement of common infrastructure to assist with new projects getting off the ground.
- Councils are not a focus of the plan, with the already announced one-off Resource Community Infrastructure Fund the only part of the plan specifically for resource communities.
- Further details will emerge as the consultation process begins. You can contact Simon Booth, Lead - Infrastructure, Policy, Regional Development on 0409 274 134 or at simon_booth@lgaq.asn.au to discuss the plan and the LGAQ response.

LGAQ Lead Contact for this matter: Simon Booth, Lead - Infrastructure, Policy, Regional Development

8. Housing Update

Local Government Housing Advocacy Plan and Local Housing Needs Survey

- The LGAQ is continuing to progress development of a Local Government Housing Advocacy Plan to comprehensively consider and define priority advocacy asks to address housing supply, diversity and affordability challenges across Queensland's regions
- The preparation of the Local Government Housing Advocacy Plan was supported by the LGAQ Policy Executive in August 2021 and is intended to reflect the outcomes from the LGAQ Annual Conference in October 2021. It also recognises the work underway across Queensland councils including the release of the Western Queensland Alliance's housing market study in late 2021.
- The LGAQ will be seeking the endorsement of the LGAQ Policy Executive in mid-February 2022 for release of an initial Local Government Housing Advocacy Plan, supported by a proposed LGAQ housing campaign in the lead up to the Federal election.
- To further inform the development of the Local Government Housing Advocacy Plan beyond its initial phase, the LGAQ also distributed a Local Housing Needs Survey to councils in January 2022.

- The LGAQ Local Housing Needs Survey has the dual purpose of also informing the upcoming Rural and Remote Councils Compact's Policy and Legislation Committee Meeting scheduled for 17 February 2022 – also see item 10 below.

Queensland Housing Investment Growth Initiative

- In November 2021, the LGAQ hosted a webinar with the Department of Communities, Housing, and the Digital Economy, for Queensland councils to hear from the State about how to participate in the current programs and funding initiatives under the Queensland Housing Investment Growth Initiative (QHIGI). A recording of the webinar is now available on Congruent [here](#).
- Expressions of Interest (EOI) remains open for the [Housing Investment Fund](#) (HIF) under the QHIGI and there is no specified closing date for this process. Eligible proponents for the HIF may include Registered Community Housing Providers, developers, institutional investors, not-for-profit partners, social enterprises and Eligible Government Entities (which include local governments).
- EOIs for the other two QHIGI programs – i.e. [QuickStart's Qld](#) and [Help to Home](#) - have recently closed.
- Further information regarding the QHIGI is available on [Congruent](#) and also the [Queensland Government website](#).

Review of National Housing and Homelessness Agreements – Consultation Request

- The Productivity Commission is conducting a review of the current National Housing and Homelessness Agreement and released an Issues Paper on 21 December 2021 calling for submissions by 21 February 2022.
- Overall, the Commission's review is intended to examine how well the Australian, State and Territory Governments have achieved the commitments set out in the Housing and Homelessness Agreement and will also consider the suitability of the Agreement for the future and the impact of social and economic factors, including the coronavirus pandemic, on housing and homelessness in Australia.
- Further information about the review is available on [Congruent](#), including the Terms of Reference and a copy of the Issues Paper
- The LGAQ welcomes council feedback to inform its submission to the Productivity Commission. If your council would like to provide feedback in relation to the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement Review and the specific questions contained in the Issues Paper, please send this through to Crystal Baker (crystal_baker@lgaq.asn.au) by **COB Friday 11 February 2022**.

LGAQ Lead Contacts for these matters: Crystal Baker, Lead - Planning & Development

9. Waste Update

Future of waste levy advance payments

- On 11 December 2021, the State Government announced a \$2.1 billion package for improved waste and resource recovery operations across Queensland that incorporates waste levy advance payments and a \$1 billion Recycling and Jobs Fund.
- Minister Scanlon announced the continuation of the 105% waste levy advance payments for 2022/23 (until June 2023). This represents \$150 million to local councils.
- Minister Scanlon also committed to a phased, sustainable transition in funding that reduces the payments over the next 8-10 years for SEQ and the seven (7) largest regional councils as industry continues to develop, allowing councils the opportunity to explore and implement, options to divert municipal solid waste (MSW) from landfill in a sustainable manner.
- The State government has also acknowledged that there will always be a residual waste stream that has no significant value and remain difficult to divert from landfill. The SEQ and larger regional

councils will retain a 20% waste levy advance payment and represents a retention of approximately \$30 million of ongoing funding for councils.

- The remaining regional Queensland waste levy councils will retain 100% of the waste levy advance payments, reducing the advance payment from 105% to 100% from July 2023.
- Non-waste levy councils will remain as non-waste levy councils.
- Waste levy incremental increases will increase \$10/year in SEQ until reaching \$145/tonne in line with NSW. In regional Queensland these increases will be limited to CPI increases.

Queensland Organic Waste Strategy

- Department of Environment and Science (DES) has finalised consultation on the development of a *Queensland Organic Waste Strategy* to divert food organics (FO) and garden organics (GO) from landfill. The Strategy will be underpinned with the development of a detailed Implementation Plan.
- Five (5) Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) workshops have been held during November 2021 – January 2022 to assist in the development of the Implementation Plan.
- Two (2) dedicated workshops to brief councils on the Implementation Plan were held in January 2022 to provide an overview of the key actions relevant to local councils.
- Funding/costs have been raised by several key stakeholder groups and must be considered alongside the development of the strategy and supporting detailed action plan.
- A number of 'organics trials' are continuing – Townsville, Lockyer Valley, Ipswich and Rockhampton, with a purpose of understanding appropriate 'fit for purpose' organic programs. Some early impressive results have been reported by councils.

Regional Waste Management Plans

- On 12th November, Minister Scanlon provided a waste management update to Mayors and CEOs of regional waste levy councils on the waste levy and regional waste planning. Of particular interest was the importance the Minister placed on regional partnerships and collaboration and the need to develop regional waste management plans across Queensland.
- A number of regional plans are in the early planning stages across waste levy council areas, however the Minister has also committed to **fully fund** the development of regional waste management plans in both levy and non-waste levy areas with a focus on regional, rural and remote areas of Queensland.
- This work is progressing with the State Government having commenced contacting ROCs to discuss the development and funding of these regional plans.
- Infrastructure needs highlighted through the regional planning process is expected to link back to the allocation of funds from the \$1 billion Recycling and Jobs Fund.

LGAQ Lead Contact for this matter: Robert Ferguson, Lead – Public Health and Waste

10. Rural & Remote Councils Compact

- The next meeting of the Rural and Remote Councils Compact Policy and Legislation Committee has been scheduled for 17 February and will feature an update on roads issues raised through the Compact last year as well as a discussion on housing needs, as a key strategic priority.
- Feedback was sought from rural and remote councils through an LGAQ housing survey, which was released on 17 January and closed on 31 January 2022. This will assist the Compact Guardians in advocating about the housing crisis across rural and remote communities.
- As was outlined last year, the Guardians have identified the key strategic priorities of roads, housing and financial sustainability to raise with the State Government through the first year of the Compact.

- Last year's first Policy and Legislation Committee meeting focused on roads, and has led to some important work on action items including:
 - Road Maintenance Performance Contracts (RMPCs);
 - Procurement Policy;
 - First and last mile;
 - Roads off alignment; and
 - Roads in rural areas.
- More information will be released about progress on these roads issues soon.
- Given the significant investment from the State Government in the budget and the Annual Conference endorsement of a housing summit, we want to continue the momentum on housing advocacy – which is still a major issue across many local communities.
- A copy of the Rural and Remote Councils Compact is [online](#).

LGAQ Lead Contact for this matter: Nathan Ruhle, Lead – Intergovernmental Relations

11. Goondiwindi Regional Council v Tait

- The LGAQ's law reform proposal for the *Civil Liabilities Act* was lodged with the State Government in March 2021.
- Following a meeting with the Attorney-General on 13 September, the LGAQ met with representatives from Crown Law and the Attorney-General's office to further discuss the issue.
- The LGAQ and DTMR have established a working group to consider RMPC contract conditions. The working group - made up of representatives from seven councils, DTMR and LGAQ met in November 2021, and again in December 2021.
- Discussions were collaborative and productive and the LGAQ sees this as an important avenue to work through operational issues identified by councils. The LGAQ will seek further legal advice if necessary.
- The next working group meeting is scheduled for 16 February 2022.

LGAQ Lead Contact for this matter: Robert Chow – Lead – Transport and Logistics and Alison Smith, Chief Executive Officer

12. 2022 ROC Assembly

- The 2022 ROC Assembly scheduled for 9-10 February 2022 has been postponed to Thursday 17 March – Friday 18 March 2022. It is likely the Thursday session will start around lunch time.
- The LGAQ has made this difficult decision to postpone the ROC Assembly after seeking feedback from all ROC EOs.
- The overwhelming feedback demonstrated a shared concern regarding the ability for safe travel and return to remote communities during the projected COVID-19 peak infection period.
- Following consultation with ROC EOs, it was clear that an in-person ROC Assembly was preferred, so the decision has been made to postpone the Assembly rather than to hold it virtually.
- Given the impending Federal Election, we have scheduled a 1-hour short and sharp online session for Thursday 10 February 2022 10:00am, purely focused on updating the ROCs on the LGAQ and ALGA's Federal Election Campaign and strategy.
- The 2022 ROC Assembly will remain in person and in Townsville to honour the 2021 original commitment to host the Assembly.
- In the meantime, please contact Georgia Stafford if there are any items you would like considered for inclusion on the agenda.

LGAQ Lead Contact for this matter: Georgia Stafford – Lead Intergovernmental Relations

13. Water and Wastewater Update

QWRAP Project Update – Funding Round 5 (July 2018 – June 2022)

- QWRAP is an industry-led initiative to investigate regional collaboration on water and sewerage services in regional Queensland. The Program is a collaboration between the LGAQ, qldwater, the Queensland Government, and 57 participating councils.
- There are currently six established QWRAP regions, out of which 4 have formed Water Alliances. QWRAP also supports several technical and emerging regions. This expands coverage of QWRAP to all of Queensland outside of the Cape York first nations councils and South East Queensland.
- FNQROC is a key QWRAP region and have been approved for a funding amount of \$118,520 (excl. GST) from the current round of funding for several key initiatives, the most recent one being the extension of successful Regional Sewer Relining -Program Coordinator project.
- The current round of QWRAP funding (\$815,000 per annum) will cease in 2021/2022. The LGAQ was successful in seeking additional funding for continuation of the Program beyond Round 5.
- Minister Glenn Butcher announced [permanent QWRAP funding of \\$2M p.a.](#) (as per the LGAQ submission/ask) on 16 December 2021 to support 9 regional collaborations and emerging regions.

Queensland Great Artesian Basin Advisory Council (QGABAC) Update

- The LGAQ has nominated (and supported the extension of) Cr Ian Todd from Balonne to be the Local Government (LG) representative for the upcoming 4-year term of QGABAC. Cr Todd assumed the LG representative role towards the end of the last term of QGABAC with the LGAQ providing administrative support.
- The Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water (RDMW) is currently in the process of finalising briefing papers to the Minister and will advise on the outcomes of the nominations for QGABAC when they are available.
- The Great Artesian Basin (GAB) [story map](#) is now available online. It explains the hydrology of the basin, the impact of open bores and includes an interactive timeline to tell the story of the GAB.

LGAQ Lead Contact for this matter: Subathra Ramachandram, Lead – Water and Wastewater

14. Natural Resources and Environment Update

LGAQ Natural Resource Management Forums 2022

- The LGAQ is running a series of Natural Resource Management (NRM) forums across the state between March and May this year.
- These forums are an opportunity for NRM managers and officers to:
 - discuss a range of hot topics
 - showcase local NRM work
 - hear from other councils and share knowledge to support delivery of NRM
 - collaborate on key priorities
 - network and build relationships and opportunities.
- One of the forums will be hosted by Hinchinbrook Shire Council on 17 May in Ingham.
- Each forum is tailored to the issues and needs of the region in which it is held. The interim programs will be released shortly.

LGAQ Lead Contact for these matters: Kristy Gooding, Lead – Natural Resources and Environmental Management

Natural Resource Management, Great Barrier Reef and Climate Investment Project

- In late 2021, the LGAQ commenced a project to investigate the level of investment and types of activities being delivered by councils in relation to natural resource management, Great Barrier Reef protection and climate mitigation and adaptation.
- The LGAQ sent a survey to all councils on 16 November 2021 seeking feedback on current levels of local government resourcing and investment across a range of key themes; the types of activities that are being delivered under each theme; and to identify innovative/showcase projects that can be shared amongst local governments and other partners.
- Originally the closing date for feedback on the survey was early December 2021, but this was extended until late January 2022 to maximise the number of survey responses received.
- The LGAQ is currently reviewing the survey results and intends to use the aggregated data to support further advocacy in relation to a range of NRM, GBR and climate related policy, funding and program matters going forward. Data will be used to tell the whole of Queensland local government picture and individual council data will not be identifiable.

LGAQ Lead Contacts for this matter: Kristy Gooding, Lead – Natural Resources and Environmental Management and Crystal Baker – Planning & Development; Climate Risk & Resilience

15. Covid – Workforce Update

- As expected, COVID-related issues are dominating workforce discussions at the moment with many councils being directly impacted through staff with COVID or being identified as close contacts with people with COVID.
- Some councils are now facing the dilemma of dealing with unvaccinated staff who are struggling to perform their roles in those areas regulated by health directives which demand workers be vaccinated.
- The LGAQ is convening regular catch ups with council HR staff to address emerging concerns and share strategies and tactics for dealing with COVID related issues.
- Note: To date, only one Queensland Council has mandated vaccinations for all staff, though the deadline for being vaccinated has recently been extended.

LGAQ Lead Contacts for this matter: Tony Goode and Suzanne Naughton

16. LGAQ Submissions Update

Recent Submissions

- *Inquiry into the functions of the Independent Assessor and the performance of those functions (15 December)*
- *Queensland Renewable Energy Zone (QREZ) Technical Discussion Paper (14 January)*

Upcoming Submissions

- *Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan (11 February)*
- *Federal Budget Submission*
- *National Housing and Homelessness Agreement Review (21 February)*
- *State Budget Submission*
- *Review of Queensland's Cultural Heritage Acts – Options Paper (31 March)*