

The Queensland Plan

A 30-year vision for Queensland



Queensland Plan Ambassadors Council meeting communiqué

10 October 2023

The Queensland Plan Ambassadors Council (the Council) held its third meeting of 2023 in Cairns on 10 October. The focus of this meeting was the *Queensland Plan's* foundation areas of 'Regions' and 'People' with particular emphasis on regional innovation and local entrepreneurship, First Nations innovation and place-based approaches.

The Council received presentations from the Queensland Chief Entrepreneur, the Queensland Small Business Commissioner, Partner Up Queensland, Launch Y(E)P, Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport, Queensland Indigenous Business Network, Cape York Partnership, Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and the Head of the Cairns Institute at James Cook University where the meeting was hosted.

Councillor Bob Manning, Mayor of Cairns Regional Council provided an overview of the region and future opportunities. Cairns Regional Council have invested significantly in the arts and have invested in infrastructure such as the Cairns Performing Arts Centre, and refurbishment of the Mulgrave Shire Council office into a gallery to support arts industry growth.

Aaron Fa'aoso, Far North Queensland Regional Community Forum member joined Ambassadors to speak about how Forums provide a good opportunity for government representatives, industry and Forum members to engage on challenges and opportunities in the regions. Forums create a platform to share information and to discuss place-based solutions to emerging priorities.

Darren Cleland, Executive Regional Director, Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning provided a presentation on the Cairns Marine Precinct. The Cairns Marine Precinct (CMP) delivers infrastructure investment to capitalise on emerging defence and other marine industry opportunities.

The Queensland Plan foundation area – Regions

Julia Spicer, Queensland Chief Entrepreneur discussed the role of Chief Entrepreneur and raised the challenges she sees for regional innovation. The Chief Entrepreneur talked about the importance of elevating and prioritising the regions to meet many of the innovation and entrepreneurial targets of the *Queensland Plan*.

Dominique Lamb, Queensland Small Business Commissioner provided an overview of their role in enhancing the operating environment for small businesses in Queensland and reducing the time and cost associated with resolving small business disputes. Challenges facing small business include skill shortages, housing availability and the increased cost of living impacting upon operating costs.

Mel Varoy, Regional Coordinator, Science and Innovation, Cairns & Far North Queensland, Partner Up Queensland, Regional Science and Innovation Network presented on the Advance Queensland Regional Futures initiative, and specifically the state-wide approach to increasing science and innovation engagement in regional Queensland.

Tara Diversi and Kate Montgomery, Entrepreneurship Facilitators, Launch Y(E)P discussed the recent Tropical Innovation Festival, held annually in Cairns. This festival celebrates innovation, entrepreneurship while being inspired, learning and connecting in Tropical North Queensland.

Presenters spoke to the importance of supporting businesses to identify what innovation and entrepreneurship looks like in their community and region. There was also robust discussion on the strategies to engage young people and employers to create greater pathways and opportunities.

The Queensland Plan foundation area – People

Councillor Ross Andrew, Mayor of Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council provided Ambassadors an overview of the Yarrabah Shire communities' challenges, particularly with child care services.

Mali Ingram, Business Development Officer, Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport spoke about Our Country Advisory Service and support in growing First Nations Tourism. The Year of Indigenous Tourism 2020 – 2021 was the catalyst to supercharge the focus of government and industry on developing Queensland as a leading destination for Indigenous tourism experiences. Working directly with Indigenous people as cultural knowledge holders to create culturally trusted engagement with the tourism sector, to support businesses and aspiring enterprises to identify their commercial tourism offering.

Julie-ann Lambourne, Queensland Indigenous Business Network (Network) representative, provided an overview of the newly established Network. The Network is an independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation being led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to help First Nations owned small businesses grow and thrive. The Network will provide services to support First Nations business growth, such as establishing regional hubs and providing business mentoring; linking First Nations businesses to procurement opportunities and connecting businesses to local networks and stakeholders to provide a channel of representative voice, advocacy, services and support to First Nations businesses.

Rose Manzini, Chief Operating Officer, Cape York Partnership provided a presentation on the work and programs of the Cape York Partnership (CYP). CYP works to create an education pathway for school students into employment. Ms Manzini highlighted CYP is creating a legacy for young people, building opportunities for employment, and building financial products to help support the community.

Place-based Approaches

David Stoltz, Assistant Coordinator-General, Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning spoke about the broader role of the Coordinator-General and presented on the Cairns South State Development Area (SDA). SDAs are defined areas of land in Queensland established by the Coordinator-General to promote economic development.

Associate Professor Ruth Barker, Project Lead, James Cook University presented on Far North Queensland Connect: Connecting people, connecting care. Far North Queensland Connect is a vehicle for strengthening the integration of disability, rehabilitation and lifestyle services for children, young people, adults and older people.

Local site visits

The Council attended a site visit to James Cook University Idea Lab whereby several local innovators and entrepreneurs showcased some of their current work. The Ideas Lab is a platform to help create a portfolio of regional innovation to be fed back into industry.

Next meeting

The Council will hold its next meeting in Brisbane on 13 December 2023.