

Queensland Plan Ambassadors Council 16 December Communique

The Ambassadors Council held its final 2019 meeting on 16 December 2019 in Brisbane.

The Council welcomed a new member, Ms Suzanne Cadigan. Ms Cadigan has worked in the health sector for more than 40 years, including as the Nursing Director of Surgical and Perioperative Services at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital for 12 years. Now retired, Ms Cadigan is a board member of the Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service and a passionate Queenslander.

The valuable contributions of Mr Mark Henley and Professor John Cole, whose terms expired in October 2019, were recognised by Ambassadors. Mr Henley and Professor Cole were Ambassadors for five years and the Council benefited from their knowledge and insights throughout their terms.

Ambassadors were pleased to welcome to the meeting the Honourable Stirling Hinchliffe MP, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs, the Premier's representative responsible for the Queensland Plan.

During the meeting, Ambassadors also met with representatives from peak bodies and the public sector on law and justice, youth crime and social cohesion and liveability in the regions. These topics support four of the nine Queensland Plan's foundational areas: Community, Regions, People and Governance.

Law and justice

Balancing the interests of all Queenslanders is the key to good governance, as decisions made by governments change peoples' lives. Ambassadors were joined by Mr Scott McDougall, Queensland Human Rights Commissioner who presented on the new *Human Rights Act 2019* which commences on 1 January 2020.

Mr McDougall provided an overview of the aims of the Act: to build a culture in the Queensland public sector that respects and promotes human rights. Ambassadors agreed the Act promotes discussions on human rights in government decisions and discussed with Mr McDougall the new complaints process and applying the Act to non-public entities. The Human Rights Commission has resources for all Queenslanders on their website www.qhrc.qld.gov.au

Ambassadors also meet Ms Anne Edwards, Secretariat Director of the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council (QSAC) to discuss sentencing matters. Ambassadors discussed the challenges faced in sentencing matters, with a balance to be struck between rehabilitation and punishment. Ambassadors heard how they and others in the community have opportunities to influence community perceptions on sentencing through informational tools provided by QSAC on their website www.sentencingcouncil.qld.gov.au, as media coverage often does not capture the complexities of legal cases.

Youth crime and social cohesion

The Queensland Plan recognises people are our greatest asset and we all thrive when we create opportunities for everyone and make connections within our communities.

Ambassadors welcomed Mr Scott Stewart MP, Deputy Speaker, Member for Townsville and Chair of the Queensland Social Cohesion Implementation Committee (QSIC) to discuss QSIC's work in promoting connections within communities.

Ambassadors supported QSIC's focus on community led initiatives and emphasised the important role of grassroots organisations in supporting social cohesion in communities. Ambassadors consider cooperation and coordination between grassroots organisations essential to supporting social cohesion.

Ambassadors also heard from Queensland Police Service Officers on innovative new bail support programs, including Operation Regenerate, being run by police to keep young people out of detention and support them to not reoffend.

Ambassadors engaged in this important discussion to better understand the challenges facing police officers and the community in tackling youth crime, including such issues as coordination with social

service providers, experiences from city or region-based initiatives and the impact of drug and alcohol in youth crime.

Liveability in the regions

The Council is invested in supporting and building thriving regions. Ambassadors live and work across Queensland, from the Tropical North to the Darling Downs.

Ambassadors welcomed Mr Patrick Wildie, Assistant Under Treasurer, Queensland Treasury to discuss the Draft Productivity Commission Remote Area Tax Concessions and Payments Report.

Ambassadors agreed with the Queensland Government's submission that if the recommendations in the draft report were implemented, they will have direct and material impacts on many residents of regional and remote Queensland. Ambassadors also discussed the impacts on regional and remote business and service providers that rely directly or indirectly on remote area concessions and payments to attract and retain staff.

Ambassadors committed to raising awareness of the draft report and its recommendations in their communities.

Looking forward to 2020

The Ambassadors Council is looking forward to a productive 2020.

Acknowledging the strong reflection of the Queensland Plan in *Advancing Queensland's Priorities* the Ambassadors Council will focus on the following themes in 2020:

- bright ideas – our biggest ideas have real social and economic benefits
- valuing of education – education is highly valued by all Queenslanders
- mental health – Queensland leads Australia in improving mental health and wellbeing
- liveability and liveable regions – Queensland is the best place to live in Australia and all Queenslanders are highly satisfied with the liveability of their region
- environmental balance – Queensland has the best balance of environmental protection and economic development in Australia
- community governance – Queenslanders are highly satisfied with the ways government delivers for their communities

Ambassadors are committed to engaging with representatives from across the Queensland community and welcomes ongoing interest in their work.

Background information

Overview of Productivity Commission Report

On 4 September 2019, the Australian Productivity Commission (PC) released a Draft Report on Remote Area Tax Concessions and Payments.

The PC was asked by the Australian Government to assess the policy merits of three key existing measures (zone tax offset (ZTO), fringe benefits tax (FBT) remote area concessions, and the Remote Area Allowance (RAA)), including whether they meet their objectives, their relevance in contemporary Australia, and to consider the appropriate ongoing form and function of these measures.

The PC made a range of draft findings and recommendations, including that the Australian Government:

- Should abolish the Zone Tax Offset (ZTO) and the overseas forces tax offset.
- Should revise the *Social Security Act 1991 (Cth)* to align the remote area allowance (RAA) geographical boundaries with the Australian Bureau of Statistics remoteness classification for very remote and remote areas; and revise payment rates for the RAA.
- Should amend the *Fringe Benefits Tax Assessment Act 1986 (Cth)* to make changes to the tax treatment of employer-provided housing, employee sourced housing, holiday transport and some fuel and meal benefits.

Overview of Queensland Government Submission

The Queensland Government made a submission to the PC in response to the Draft Report.

The submission highlighted that, if the PC's recommendations were implemented, they will have direct and material impacts on many residents of regional and remote Queensland as well as state agencies that rely directly or indirectly on remote area concessions and payments to attract and retain staff.

Ambassadors Council

In 2014, the Ambassadors Council was established under the *Queensland Plan Act 2014* to promote awareness, and advocate for the implementation, of *The Queensland Plan* within the community, business and industry.

As a group, we serve as champions of the plan, ensuring its visibility and encouraging everyone, from government and large industries to small businesses and individuals, to strive towards its vision and goals.

We are also tasked with providing advice to the Premier about the implementation of *The Queensland Plan*.

Ambassadors Council membership

Name	Organisation	Location
The Hon. Tony McGrady (Chair)	Former Councillor and Mayor of Mt Isa City Council and a former state Minister.	Mt Isa
Mr Daniel Gschwind	CEO for the Queensland Tourism Industry Council	Brisbane
Mr Leon Yeatman	CEO in the local government sector –serving at Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council (now a strategic planner for Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council)	Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council
Ms Karen Tully	Self-employed rural and remote specialist consultancy business which provides energy and direction to rural projects	Charleville
Ms Shelley Argent	National spokesperson for Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays	Brisbane
Professor Allan Dale	Professor of Tropical Regional Development at The Cairns Institute, JCU Strategic Advisor for the Collaborative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia	Cairns
Ms Kate Tully	Head of College at Duchesne College within UQ	Brisbane

	Director (Chair) of QCOSS	
Mr Taj Pabari	Young inventor, social entrepreneur and educational pioneer	Brisbane
Ms Patsy-Ann Fox	Councillor of Richmond Shire Council Co-owner-operator of Fox Helicopters	Richmond Shire
Ms Suzanne Cadigan	Nursing Director, Surgical and Perioperative Services, Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, registered nurse and current Board member of Children's Health Queensland. Current Practitioner Member, Nursing and Midwifery Board Queensland	Brisbane
Ms Erin Faithful	Bachelor of Biomedical Science student at James Cook University in Townsville. Awarded Young Citizen of the Year at the Mount Isa City Council's 2017 Australia Day ceremony.	Townsville