

Queensland Plan Ambassadors Council 28 April communiqué

The Ambassadors Council held its first meeting for 2021 in Roma on 28 April 2021.

The Ambassadors were pleased to travel to regional Queensland for their first meeting of the year, as part of a commitment to engage with communities from across the State. The meeting focused on two of the Council's 2021 priorities – *Building an inclusive society* and *Regional innovation* – and featured presentations on LGBTIQ+ inclusion in rural and remote settings, the Balonne Shire migration and resettlement project, and an overview and outlook for the Maranoa region. The Ambassadors also met with local business and community leaders in Roma to learn more about regional innovation and the challenges faced in the regions.

Inclusion

Mr Ben Bjarnesen, the founder and Managing Director of the LGBTQ Domestic Violence Awareness Foundation and an operational Police Officer previously stationed in Roma, spoke to Ambassadors about the experiences of LGBTQ people in regional and remote areas. Discussions centred on the detrimental impact that isolation, loneliness and a lack of awareness in the general community, can have on regional and rural LGBTQ community members, as well challenges to accessing health and support services, particularly relating to mental health and sexual health.

Ms Kate Venables from CatholicCare and Ms Jane Cornish from Balonne Shire Council also spoke to the Ambassadors Council about initiatives to support multiculturalism and the settlement of overseas migrants, particularly refugees, into the local communities in the region. The Ambassadors heard that work is ongoing to support local businesses to engage and overcome hesitancy about engaging workers from different cultures, as well as preparing local communities to be more inclusive.

Queenslanders' vision for our state as outlined in the Queensland Plan is:

'We will have a community spirit that embraces our diversity and unique culture and gives everyone the opportunity to shine. We will not leave anybody behind.'

Region snapshot

Councillor Tyson Golder, Mayor of Maranoa Regional Council, provided the Ambassadors with an overview of the Maranoa region and the Council's future management plans to support improved liveability, and economic and population growth.

Mayor Golder also provided insights into issues adversely affecting regional communities like Maranoa, such as housing availability and affordability; ageing populations; insufficient technology infrastructure to attract and retain businesses and young people to the region; and the impact of regional newspapers closures, particularly for older and lower socio-economic community members. The decline in volunteer numbers, and the impact of this on community organisations and events – such as regional shows, many of which will not run this year – was also discussed, with the Ambassadors noting this issue is affecting communities across the State.

Queenslanders' vision for our state as outlined in the Queensland Plan is:

'In 30 years, Queensland will be home to vibrant and prosperous communities.'

'Government can't do this alone but as a community working together, we can achieve everything we want for our state's future.'

Local innovation and business visits

The Ambassadors also took the opportunity while in Roma to visit local businesses and meet with regional business and training representatives to better understand regional innovation and the challenges and opportunities regional businesses face. Organisations engaged with included Roma Commerce and Tourism, Golden West Training, and the Maranoa Innovation Network.