



MEDIA RELEASE

Issued Thursday, 10 July 2008

North Queensland outstrips regional neighbours

Townsville Enterprise has taken the unique opportunity presented by a fresh Council, fresh Chairman and fresh fiscal year to benchmark the region's key economic indicators against neighbouring regions.

The organisation engaged experienced consultants from outside the region to conduct a review of the latest available data, and compare the organisation against neighbouring counterparts in the Far North Queensland, Mackay and Fitzroy regions.

The consultant's draft report revealed the North Queensland region is experiencing growth at a faster rate than all three other regions in central and north Queensland.

The latest AECgroup data (from 2006/07) also shows the Northern Statistical region (Townsville and North Queensland) has the largest and fastest growing Gross Regional Product of all four regions. The region's \$11.87 billion economy with 7.8% growth was stronger than the next best, Fitzroy (Gladstone and Rockhampton region) \$10.76 billion with 7.1%.

The growth in the Townsville, North Queensland region was not restricted to heavy industry growth attributed to the resources boom – the region's tourism growth also outstripped neighbouring regions.

The three year trend statistics to December 2007 showed both Domestic and International leisure visitation to the Far North Queensland and the Mackay Whitsunday regions is growing at a rate slower than in the Townsville North Queensland region, when using either leisure visitor numbers or visitor nights as measures.

The report also indicated North Queensland businesses are getting a better return on investment from Council funding of Townsville Enterprise.

The study found that Councils and businesses in neighbouring regions were paying as many as five organisations more dollars to perform the same functions as Townsville Enterprise.

The consultant's report found that despite receiving less funding per capita, and less funding per employee than neighbouring counterparts, Townsville Enterprise was able to deliver stronger results based on stated objectives.

Transpac Consulting Managing Director Warwick Powell's report stated that the organisations that were surveyed all shared the same objectives of economic growth and increased tourism visitation.

"In light of this baseline comparison of funding performance the outcomes achieved by Townsville Enterprise in areas such as economic development and tourism performance are significant and are an endorsement of the economies of scale that Townsville Enterprise is able to achieve through its delivery structure," Mr Powell said.

Minister for Tourism, Regional Development and Industry Desley Boyle has frequently stated publicly that Townsville Enterprise is a best practice integrated model for growing regional economies and their industry bases including tourism. As a one stop shop, Townsville Enterprise is acknowledged as an effective and efficient model to ensure no duplication and waste of valuable regional resources.

Townsville Enterprise Chairman John Bearne said he was happy with the report's findings and was pleased with the direction the organisation is taking.

"My stated first priority when taking on this role was to understand where Townsville Enterprise sits as an organisation and how we move forward."

"This report has measured how successfully the region is meeting the goals outlined by Townsville Enterprise – and how we compare with other regions, and organisations around us."

"I'm proud to say that the Townsville region is receiving great bang for its buck – both from individual businesses that choose to support Townsville Enterprise, and in terms of the funding we receive from the Townsville City Council."

"We're obviously hoping that the findings of this report will have some influence in Council's decision regarding future funding of Townsville Enterprise."

"It's no secret that the Council is considering its level of funding – and we believe this report gives weight to the argument that the Council should be looking at maintaining its funding level for Townsville Enterprise in line with the Transpac report," Mr Bearne said.

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