

When contacting Council please ask for



82 Brisbane Street
PO Box 25
BEAUDESERT QLD 4285

Tel 07 5540 5111
Fax 07 5540 5103

mail@scenicrim.qld.gov.au
www.scenicrim.qld.gov.au

ABN: 45 596 234 931

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Ms Heather Crighton
Acting Research Director
Agriculture, Resources and
Environment Committee
Parliament House, George St
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Ms Crighton

Submission regarding *Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014*

Scenic Rim Regional Council appreciates the opportunity to provide comment on the *Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014*, which incorporates revisions to the *River Improvement Trust Act 1940*.

Council is an affected stakeholder of the foreshadowed legislative changes through not only its statutory involvement in the present Scenic Rim River Improvement Trust (RIT), but also its likely connection to any future entity established by the State.

It is the position of Council that it supports in principle the concept of a singular whole-of-catchment RIT comprising either the Brisbane River Catchment or ultimately South East Queensland as a means of enhancing the stewardship of catchment areas.

However, it is crucial that such a body have appropriate local government representation at the decision-making level from councils within the identified RIT area. This outcome is not provided for under the proposed reforms as these are currently presented, which instead vest significant powers in the State.

To this end, Council seeks amendments to the provisions of Clauses 23, 24 and 41 of the proposed legislation, consistent with the positions of the Local Government Association of Queensland and the Council of Mayors (SEQ) Ltd, to articulate the roles and obligations, particularly financial, of local government.

We support an outcome which establishes any new RIT as a mechanism for the determination of programs, the oversight of contributed funds from local government and the State, and the allocation of such funds to suitable catchment management initiatives which provide the greatest benefit within the overall RIT area.

Council does not believe a future RIT entity ought be directly involved with responsibility for water security within its coverage area, particularly as the majority of local government areas within South East Queensland are not the principal providers of potable water to the community.

Further, we believe the three core RIT outcomes supported by Council can be achieved without the necessity for a substantial administrative structure as we do not see this entity as having an operational role in the delivery of on-ground works, which could be undertaken by existing bodies such as SEQ Catchments.

Within Scenic Rim, such a body would build on existing grass roots relationships fostered by the present RIT to engage with community-based networks, catchment management associations and Landcare groups to deliver cost-effective projects on the ground which achieve the best environmental outcomes.

It is also the position of Council that the present RIT framework remains in effect until such time as any new entity reaches a suitable level of organisational maturity. At this point, a determination can be made regarding the process for integration into a whole-of catchment RIT.

However, in the event a new entity is to only cover a portion of a local government area it would be appropriate that Section 14 of the *River Improvement Trust Act 1940* be further reviewed to provide affected councils with the flexibility to determine the most appropriate means to provide financial contributions to the RIT.

Yours faithfully


Craig Barke
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER