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From: Kim Ovens [Kim.Ovens@bundaberg.qld.gov.au] on behalf of Lorraine Pyefinch - (Mayor)
 [Lorraine.Pyefinch@bundaberg.qld.gov.au]
Sent: Friday, 21 May 2010 11:46 AM
To: Economic Development Committee
Subject: In reply to 10/008609 - Grey Nomad Tourism



20th May 2010

The Research Director
 Economic Development Committee
 Parliament House
 George Street
 Brisbane Queensland 4000

Dear Ms Bates,

RE: Submission of the Bundaberg Regional Council
'Inquiry into developing Queensland's rural and regional communities through grey nomad tourism'

Your letter of 15th April 2010 is acknowledged, and Council welcomes the opportunity to support any initiative that will help develop regional communities in Queensland through grey nomad tourism.

Specific reference and comment is made to the following points, contained within your Issues Paper Number 3:

Economic Contribution of grey nomads to rural and regional areas of Queensland

The Issues Paper confirms statistical analysis of tourists visiting Queensland that, in 2006, visitors between the ages of 45 and 64 constituted 36 per cent of visitors utilising camping and caravan parks, whilst those above 65 years made up 16 per cent. Further, in Queensland's regional areas, tourists staying in caravan parks or camping grounds constituted up to 27 per cent of accommodation nights. This data suggests that grey nomads are important to the commercial camping and caravan park industry in Queensland, and that grey nomads play an important role in regional tourism in Queensland. In the Bundaberg region, caravanning and camping accommodation sector rose 3% over the past year.

The Bundaberg Regional Council operate four holiday park properties in the city and coastal communities of the Bundaberg region and confirm that a significant proportion of its domestic market comprise grey nomad visitors. It is our observation that grey nomads generally have a wide range of skills that could be of use to people in isolated rural communities, perhaps on a volunteer basis, and that most grey nomads try to experience all that our region has to offer before moving on, extending their stay if there are activities of interest.

Public Infrastructure requirements of grey nomads

It is our observation that the infrastructure requirements of grey nomads resolve around three main areas: a) roadways, b) waste disposal, and c) signage. Council commits significant financial resources towards improving and maintaining its road network, but would endorse the need for further Federal and State funding to enhance local road networks, and undertake upgrades and capital projects in this area.

Similarly, Council is under increasing pressure from grey nomads to provide more recreational vehicle public dump points in and at regional gateways, public parks and transit stops, and additional welcome

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and directional signage but has been largely unable to do so due to financial constraints.

Major issues relating to the regulation of Queensland's camping and caravan parks

Council is aware of widespread unauthorized stays on public, and in some instances private, land throughout Queensland by grey nomads and other users. Council has provided whatever advice, information, regulation and enforcement action as is possible given our financial resources and operational restrictions, and note that some communities actively encourage free overnight stays through the Campervan and Motor Home Club of Australia's 'RV-Friendly Town' initiative. The CMCA describes this initiative, whereby local communities are encouraged to designate areas as welcoming free overnight stays by caravanners and campers, as 'assisting mobile travelers with basic facilities and a safe place to rest and stay for 24-48 hours'.

Apart from developments approved under the council's planning scheme and council owned and privately owned commercial caravan parks in the Local Government Area, and the roadside rest area at Sharon Nature Park, there are no other locations designated as camping grounds within the LGA and as such any camping is unlawful, whether in cars, tents, caravans, camper trailers, motor homes or in the open.

Council's concerns about endorsing this proposal revolve around: a) sewerage and grey water disposal, b) rubbish disposal, c) toilet facilities, d) risk management and public safety and security, e) fire control and safety, and f) the commercial viability of any commercial caravan or tourist park in the vicinity of Bundaberg and its coastal population centres (who have abided by Council's laws and regulations, and make a financial contribution for the use of their land to Council). Council recognises that Caravan Parks are important small businesses which contribute to our local economy, employ local people and encourage visitors into our region, promote local attractions and invest capital and cash flow into our region.

Effective methods of marketing Queensland's rural and regional communities to grey nomad tourists

Council believes that an opportunity exists for government at both levels to support the marketing and promotional initiatives of both the Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO) and the local government authority. In the first instance, the RTO undertakes a variety of destination marketing and awareness campaigns and promotional initiatives specifically to the grey nomad market (by targeting marketing materials preferred by the market), with involvement from commercial caravan and tourist operators in the region. In the second instance, and with financial support from the State and Federal Government(s), each local Council is well placed to develop additional welcome signage, strategically placed before regional gateways, promoting the benefits and features of the region to the grey nomad, and encouraging visitation.

Use of grey nomad skills in rural and regional areas

Council believes that the sometimes unique and always genuine skills and experience of grey nomads could be effectively used in rural and regional communities through an active volunteering program. Community service and non-profit groups would appreciate the opportunity to work with and utilise the skills of visiting grey nomads to further develop and implement their respective services, also providing grey nomads with a greater sense of worth and belonging.

It is recognised that initiatives like the *Grey Nomad Teacher Employment Strategy* of the Department of Education and Training already encourages registered and retired teachers to support their travels in a unique range of rural, remote and regional locations throughout Queensland through short term teaching opportunities. Perhaps this same model could be used to enhance healthcare, social service and land management sectors throughout regional Queensland by identifying the criteria for grey nomads to be willing and able to engage in volunteering in isolated rural communities, by supporting isolated communities to address their development needs through voluntary programs for grey nomads.

I thank you for this opportunity to provide comment on the topic, and encourage you to visit Council's website (www.bundaberg.qld.gov.au) for further information on the Bundaberg region, or the tourism, economic and social development initiatives of the Bundaberg Regional Council.

Yours Sincerely

Cr Lorraine Pyefinch
Mayor - Bundaberg Regional Council