

Submission to the **State
Development, Infrastructure and
Industry Committee** on the
**SUSTAINABLE PLANNING
(INFRASTRUCTURE
CHARGES) AND OTHER
LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL 2014**

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QUEENSLAND TOURISM INDUSTRY COUNCIL

QTIC is the State's peak body for tourism in Queensland and represents the interests of business operators, 20 sector associations, 3,000 regional members and all of Queensland's 13 Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs).

QTIC works in partnership with government agencies and industry bodies at a local, state and national level to strengthen the voice of tourism in all relevant policy forums. QTIC's partnerships with the industry and government enable a greater level of responsiveness to increasingly diverse policy settings.

SUMMARY

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee on the *Sustainable Planning (Infrastructure Charges) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014*.

QTIC supports the policy objectives of the Bill to establish a framework that is equitable, certain and strikes a balance between local authority sustainability and providing confidence to the development industry when planning projects. In particular, we welcome the decision to not increase the maximum adopted charges, as well as the ability for developers to convert non-trunk infrastructure to trunk infrastructure in certain circumstances.

Furthermore, we support in principle the recently released, non-statutory "fair value infrastructure charges schedule" scheme (separate to the Bill) that provides for lower charges of generally 10 per cent for residential development and 15 per cent for retail, commercial and industrial development than the maximum adopted charges set by the SPRP.

It is understood that local governments who adopt the fair value infrastructure charges schedule will be considered for co-funding by the State Government for Priority Development Infrastructure. While specific details of the new schedule are yet to be revealed, QTIC in principle supports incentives that could potentially result in benefits to both developers and local governments.

QTIC commends the Queensland Government on addressing the infrastructure charges issues that are currently faced by developers. One of the long-standing challenges facing the expansion of the tourism industry is that new tourism developments are likely to experience medium-long term cost recovery, as opposed to the short-term cost recovery that can be achieved by other types of developments. By lowering the infrastructure charges and streamlining this process, the attractiveness to invest in Queensland and the feasibility of tourism developments are improved, allowing for a much greater investment potential in the industry.

We make the following representations regarding the specifics of the Bill:

- We support amendments that ensure infrastructure charges can only be imposed for the additional demand on trunk infrastructure that will be generated by the development, in the form of credits. This avoids Council “double dipping” and developers having to pay more infrastructure charges than necessary.
- We support amendments that allow developers to pay infrastructure charges when the relevant trigger occurs. This amendment instills further confidence in development by way of shortening the cost-recovery period and improving the project feasibility.
- We support the introduction of an infrastructure charges notice (ICN) which must include details of an applicable offset or refund. The ICN will provide a high level of transparency when determining the correct value of the infrastructure for an offset or refund.
- We support amendments that allow the developer to convert non-trunk infrastructure to trunk infrastructure where a condition requiring non-trunk infrastructure has been imposed on a development approval. This allows each development application to be assessed on its own merits, and for infrastructure charges to be appropriately applied in cases where the local government’s Priority Infrastructure Plan or Adopted Infrastructure Charges Resolution is not suitable or adequate.

APPROVALS BILATERAL

QTIC acknowledges that the Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt and the Queensland Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection Andrew Powell released on 15 May 2014 a draft Queensland bilateral agreement on environmental approvals for public comment.

QTIC is likely to make a submission regarding the specifics of the approvals bilateral agreement through the federal government’s consultation process.

While we support streamlining the environmental approvals process and faster decision timeframes for projects, the degree to which the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth) (EPBC Act) is reflected in the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971 (SDPWO Act) particularly for matters of national environmental significance (MNES), is uncertain.

For example, in the case of declared ‘coordinated projects’ under the SDPWO Act, there is no legislative requirement for the Coordinator General to consider impacts on MNES in the evaluation reports. Furthermore, recent amendments to the SDPWO Act gives the Coordinator-General the ability to ‘step in’ when state government departments or local governments are considered to have “failed in making a timely decision” on a key project. This may potentially lead to key environmental concerns not being adequately addressed.

Fundamentally, we support a bilateral agreement that removes duplication for environmental approvals, but still uphold the objects to:

- Ensure Australia complies fully with all its international environmental obligations;
- Ensure MNES are protected as required under the EPBC Act;
- Promote the conservation and ecologically sustainable use of national resources;
- Ensure an efficient, timely and effective process for environmental assessment and approval of actions; and
- Minimise duplication in the environmental assessment and approvals process of the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments.

ENQUIRIES

We thank you for considering this submission and welcome any feedback you may have. For all enquiries, please contact Daniel Gschwind (07) 3236 1445 or email policy@qtic.com.au.