

Attn: Committee Secretary, Transport and Resources Committee

Cape York Land Council submission to Transport and Resources Committee Inquiry into Peninsula Development Road (PDR)

This submission is provided by the Cape York Land Council (CYLC) and the Traditional Owner Representative Committee (TOR committee). CYLCs role is to advocate, support, and empower Cape York Aboriginal people to continue to establish and manage their rights and interests in the land and sea to produce social, cultural, and economic benefits.

On 11 July 2017, the State of Queensland, the Native Title Group and CYLC entered into the Peninsula Developmental Road (PDR) ILUA . The PDR ILUA is a mechanism through which Traditional Owners (TOs) affected by the upgrade to the Peninsula Developmental Road can derive further benefit from the project.

The PDR ILUA provides for:

- a scholarship program,
- Indigenous business opportunities
- an Indigenous employment plan,
- an environmental management strategy
- a cultural heritage management agreement and;
- the appointment of the TOR committee.

Since the commencement of the PDR ILUA, the TOR committee has met with the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) regularly to advocate for the interests of TOs throughout Cape York and to advise on the practical application of the PDR ILUA on communities affected by the PDR upgrades. We wish to see this dialogue continue in a spirit of respect and transparency.

We applaud the benefits created through the first Cape York regional package, and the outcomes it has achieved. However, there are some areas of concern that have not met TOs' expectations.

These are:

- **Training and employment outcomes are not quantifiably measured**

There is no quantifiable data available from the State about the employment and training participation for Cape York TOs upskilling through the PDR upgrade. Quantifying the professional development, upskilling, and employment outcomes for TOs is critical to assessing the outcomes of the ILUA and requires further attention and focused funding.

The TOR committee has raised concerns that not enough Cape York TOs are being provided the opportunity to acquire trade skill qualifications. For those fortunate to start and receive training, this training has often ceased when the section of road has been completed with the trainee unable to complete the training. Projects on the PDR usually last about six to nine months, effectively hindering people from finishing their traineeship and there has been a lack of tracking and follow-through of training including some TOs not receiving certificates.

The lack of retention of Cape York TOs in employment and training is a matter that CYLC and the TOR committee believe to be reconcilable through further government support and proactivity.

CYLC and the TOR committee believe there has been a lack of cross-government cohesion in delivering training and employment and no cohesion at all between each section / tendered project of the PDR upgrade. Due to the variety of companies employed to undertake each small section of construction and the variation in their key result areas (KRAs), TOs have not been supported to complete traineeships and certificates. This circumstance stifles the development of a localised workforce throughout Cape York.

- **Long term employment outcomes**

There is no obligation for tender winners to employ Cape York people and TOs . The current model provides only incentives for employers to reach KRAs. Without the obligation to achieve their KRAs it is feared that benefit of the PDR ILUA will be short-lived.

While traineeships have been offered, very few have been completed and short-term employment opportunities have not materialised into longer-term employment. This is due to each construction project being six to nine months on average and difficulties being able to follow through on the remainder of the training course to achieve completion. The lack of support from TMR to ensure continuity of employment and traineeship from year to year has created some gaps in the Cape York development of skills and employment.

- **Business opportunities for local Indigenous-owned businesses**

We support the arrangements that TMR has established with Roadtek. This approach breaks down the work into smaller construction sections that provide an incubator environment for new or established Indigenous businesses. However, we want to see a stronger commitment to developing sustainable business benefits and opportunities for TOs.

TOs have expressed difficulty in having their businesses recognised, particularly with the larger contractors. TOs believe they have struggled to access the relevant information and forms to become competitive in the securing of current works and ongoing maintenance. The TOs have also experienced difficulties in accessing clear information, through the absence of accountability and transparency in how KRAs are measured by TMR. TOs are concerned about being overlooked during the construction stages and then being further boxed out of the maintenance work which will be essential to ongoing employment after the project is complete.

The TOR committee recognises the benefit of increasing access to fresh produce and continuously reducing travel times throughout Cape York as the PDR is upgraded. These benefits have long-term positive effects on the mental, emotional and physical health and wellbeing of the TOs of Cape York.

The PDR ILUA is also generating academic opportunities each year for four secondary and two tertiary students who identify with the traditional lands through which the PDR runs.

We welcome TMR's initiative of implementing the Social, Economic and Environmental Impact Assessment in 2022 which will begin the process of developing a broader understanding of the implications and impacts of the PDR upgrade.

CYLC would also encourage the State to move to declare the road from the PDR to the Jardine River as a State Road with an ILUA for its length along the lines of the PDR ILUA. This road is of considerable strategic, economic and tourism importance and its dedication as a State road will ensure that the benefits to the people of the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula area can be realized.

We celebrate the achievements of the PDR ILUA and look forward to improving on these outcomes.

Yours sincerely,



Richie Ah Mat
Chair, Cape York Land Council

Background:

The Cape York Region Package was a program of works delivered between 2014 to 2019. The Cape York Region Package Stage 2 is a program of works delivering infrastructure upgrades on the Cape York Peninsula between 2019 to 2024.