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Forwarded by email: trc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Committee Secretary
Transport and Resources Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Ms Jeffrey,

RE: Inquiry into the Economic and Regulatory Frameworks for Queensland's Island Resorts

The Whitsunday Regional Council (WRC) would like to thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry.

WRC generally supports the purpose of the Inquiry subject to the following comments.

The Terms of Reference are not specific enough to provide detailed assistance. It is recommended the Terms of Reference specifically refer to the regulations and constraints subject of the Inquiry.

WRC supports local governments becoming the single assessment manager to simplify and streamline the assessment process for development on the Islands.

As the level of government closest to the local community, WRC is responsible for land use planning and development assessment within the Whitsunday Regional Council Local Government Area (LGA). The intervention by the state in these processes is seen as unnecessary and duplicative. Revisiting Island Resorts land tenure and providing freehold title for resort assets will provide the identical level of development control and policy development that is provided on the area of greater resource value, the mainland.

"The terms of reference for the inquiry are:

Examine and report on current regulatory frameworks that exist for Great Barrier Reef Island Resorts as they contribute to Queensland's tourism economy and regional communities."

WRC supports the elimination of duplicated regulatory requirements and the introduction of a simplified, flexible and streamlined development approval process to promote economic development on the Whitsunday Islands.

“Including the existing regulatory constraints on island resorts:

- ***Role of island resorts in attracting new and return visitors to Queensland and the Great Barrier Reef”***

The Islands play a vital role in the strength of the Whitsunday Region’s economy by increasing visitor spend and providing ongoing employment generation. Consistent upgrading of the Islands’ visitor experience offerings needs to be supported by mainland experiences to assist in visitor attraction and additional job creation. WRC encourages the state to determine mainland experiences as efficiently as possible without undue delay.

- ***“Historical operational status and existing constraints that impact economic development opportunities for island resorts”***

The State Government’s Great Barrier Reef Island Resorts Rejuvenation Program and the extension of the Queensland Government’s ecotourism strategy allows proponents to express their interest in developing walking trails, eco-accommodation and other eco-tourism products and experiences.

This will assist operators in increasing visitor numbers, resulting in increased tourist spend and job opportunities for locals.

- ***“How the determination of native title and the aspirations of traditional owners have been incorporated into operations”***

Council supports the ongoing cooperation with our traditional owners.

- ***“Infrastructure access arrangements and other challenges for lease holders to develop or redevelop islands for tourist, residential and public purposes”***

WRC currently supports the Whitsunday Islands through Shute Harbour and services West Molle Island (Daydream Island) with potable water.

Leases can be significantly rigid and restrict development and approval timeframes. An investigation into alternative land holder arrangements to enable WRC to continue its responsibility for land use planning and development assessment within the Whitsunday Regional Council LGA is encouraged to further promote economic development on the Whitsunday Islands.

- ***“Co-existence with the protected area estate both onshore and within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Area”***

WRC supports economic development that is sensitive to its surrounding environment and protects natural features that attract people to the Whitsunday Region and the Islands.

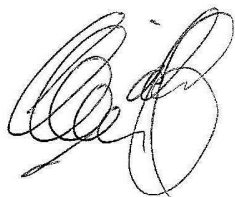
“Contribution of ownership and governance models to the above issues and an examination of how these tenure arrangements could:

- ***Enable appropriate development that supports strong social, environmental, economic, and cultural outcomes***
- ***Best support sub-tenancies to meet to contemporary requirements for commercial and residential occupancy***
- ***Allow for open and transparent dispute resolution as well as supporting an appropriate process and service standard for transfer of interests in leases and sub leases.”***

WRC supports the elimination of duplicated regulatory requirements and a simplified, flexible and streamlined development approval process to promote economic development on the Whitsunday Islands. WRC supports an open and transparent dispute resolution framework, which needs to be simple, flexible and efficient. Dispute mediation should be prioritised before dispute resolution.

Council would appreciate ongoing involvement in this Inquiry, particularly the opportunity to review and comment on the draft findings.

Yours Sincerely



Neil McGaffin
Director Development Services