BUSH COUNCILS COMPACT

Meeting the needs of the Bush

- This Compact recognises the diversity of Queensland’s rural and remote communities and the unique responsibilities, challenges and opportunities confronting the State’s 45 bush councils.

- With almost 40% of Queensland’s population living outside major metropolitan areas, rural and remote communities contribute significantly to the state’s development, economic prosperity and social fabric.

- However, small populations, funding and policy uncertainty, the tyranny of distance and a high dependence on cyclical industries can severely inhibit the ability of bush councils to deliver the essential infrastructure and services their communities need and deserve.

- Bush councils often have to provide and pay for services that are taken for granted by communities elsewhere and, in fact, are routinely delivered outside of local government.

- One-size-fits-all government policies – invariably generated in a big city environment – regularly ignore any unique circumstances existing in rural and remote economies.

- This Compact sets out a practical investment and engagement framework to guide government policies, programs and regulatory arrangements by which the liveability of rural and remote communities can be improved, jobs created, economic growth fostered and natural resources sustainably managed.

- This Compact is not a funding wish list – it is a high-level agreement designed to guarantee minimum standards of service delivery and infrastructure for rural and remote communities.

- Under this Compact, the Queensland Government will consider how every Cabinet submission, every piece of legislation and every decision might affect bush communities. It will ensure the Government facilitates policy development, resource allocation and reporting so that no rural and remote community in Queensland is left behind.

“A partnership between the Queensland Government and the Local Government Association of Queensland that enables bush councils to meet the unique challenges, responsibilities, opportunities and needs of their rural and remote communities.

“We would like to see a far greater understanding throughout government departments of the realities facing bush councils so they can make better decisions, have greater revenue certainty and, of course, improve the quality of life of rural and remote residents.”

– Mayor Paul McVeigh,
Western Downs Regional Council
A formal partnership between the Queensland Government and the LGAQ that establishes standards and commitments that empower bush councils to confidently meet the needs of their rural and remote communities.

- Transparent policy making, regulation and program delivery by government that focusses on creating jobs and delivering infrastructure and essential services in rural and remote communities.

- Embedded government decision-making mechanisms that never fail to consult and realistically reflect the unique circumstances, opportunities and challenges of rural and remote communities.

- An on-going commitment that all government programs and services are correctly targeted as well as properly managed and monitored.

This Compact will ensure the Queensland Government, the LGAQ and bush councils share the same objectives in meeting the needs of rural and remote communities:

- **Essential services security** so water, wastewater, waste management and other public services provided to rural and remote communities are safe, reliable and meet local needs.

- **Improved well-being** to support community health and liveability and attract and retain local populations.

- **Jobs growth and economic diversification** to better manage the highly cyclical nature of rural and remote economies and enable communities to reach their economic potential.

- **Improved access** through safer and more efficient road and transport systems for rural and remote communities and industry.

- **Sustainable natural resource management** that enhances the value of our natural resources and improves environmental and economic outcomes.

- **Resilient rural and remote communities** that can adapt to climate challenges and, with preventative planning and more effective responses, are better protected from natural and other disasters.

“**It just makes sense to put bush councils and their communities at the centre of decisions that impact their lives.**”

- Mayor Tony Rayner,
Longreach Regional Council
ROLES OF THE PARTIES

Queensland Government

- Establish an intergovernmental taskforce led by Department of Premier and Cabinet to develop an agreement (the “Bush Councils Compact”) between the State Government and the LGAQ that provides an ongoing commitment ensuring bush councils can always meet the needs of their rural and remote communities.
- Commence implementation of the Bush Councils Compact within the first 100 days of the new government.
- Create whole-of-government arrangements that streamline the implementation of solutions to challenges and opportunities identified by local government in rural and remote communities.
- Facilitate greater awareness across government of the impact of funding, policy and legislative decisions on bush councils by publishing an annual report on the State of Our Bush Communities, including an independent assessment of government program and service delivery to these communities. Additional initiatives to include a Regulatory Impact Statement on all proposed legislation likely to affect rural and remote communities and a co-ordinating comment on all Cabinet submissions.
- Introduce a “Bush Champions” scheme for departmental directors-general and incorporate performance clauses into their contracts related to achieving key milestones under this Compact as well as government program and service delivery to rural and remote communities.
- Respect the authority of the LGAQ in speaking on behalf of local government in relation to policy, program and regulatory strategies and priorities.

“One-size-fits-all government policies can often prove frustrating for bush councils by overlooking the unique circumstances that exist in rural and remote communities.”

- Cr Robyn Fuhrmeister, Balonne Shire Council

LGAQ

- Provide policy leadership, coordination and advice on behalf of local government, including advice on the financial and non-financial priorities of bush councils and the potential impact of Queensland Government decisions on their communities.
- Promote and facilitate bush council use of streamlined arrangements for finding and implementing solutions to problems and opportunities identified by bush councils.
- Support and facilitate a systematic approach by bush councils to acknowledging and publicising Queensland Government funding contributions to projects.
- Support enhanced governance and asset management to improve the financial sustainability for bush councils.
- Respect the responsibility of the Queensland Government to set and deliver on strategic priorities and objectives for rural and remote communities throughout the State.

“My council has 86 individual ratepayers yet manages an area larger than Tasmania.”

- Mayor Robbie Dare, Diamantina Shire Council

“Regional communities are often hamstrung by policies and regulations formulated in Brisbane to appease the social conscience of those who live 1000s of kilometres from where the extra compliance actually impacts - undermining our future.”

- Mayor Stuart Mackenzie, Quilpie Shire Council
On behalf of our 45 bush councils:

Balonne Shire Council
Banana Shire Council
Barcaldine Regional Council
Barcoo Shire Council
Blackall-Tambo Regional Council
Boulia Shire Council
Bulloo Shire Council
Burdekin Shire Council
Burke Shire Council
Carpentaria Shire Council
Cassowary Coast Regional Council
Central Highlands Regional Council
Charters Towers Regional Council
Cloncurry Shire Council
Cook Shire Council
Croydon Shire Council
Diamantina Shire Council
Douglas Shire Council
Etheridge Shire Council
Flinders Shire Council
Gladstone Regional Council
Goondiwindi Regional Council
Gympie Regional Council
Hinchinbrook Shire Council
Isaac Regional Council
Livingstone Shire Council
Lockyer Valley Regional Council
Longreach Regional Council
Maranoa Regional Council
Mareeba Shire Council
McKinlay Shire Council
Mount Isa City Council
Murweh Shire Council
North Burnett Regional Council
Paroo Shire Council
Quilpie Shire Council
Richmond Shire Council
Scenic Rim Regional Council
Somerset Regional Council
South Burnett Regional Council
Southern Downs Regional Council
Tablelands Regional Council
Western Downs Regional Council
Whitsunday Regional Council
Winton Shire Council

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