The Queensland Plan: a 30-year vision for Queensland

# CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY QUEENSLAND SUBMISSION

# 5 March 2014

# Introduction

* 1. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland (CCIQ) is the state’s peak body for small and medium businesses. CCIQ has been actively involved in the Queensland Plan consultation process to date. This includes responding to the initial six questions for developing the vision for the Queensland Plan, attending the peak body meeting and participating in the Brisbane Summit. CCIQ appreciates the opportunity to provide further feedback.
  2. CCIQ is generally supportive of the draft Queensland Plan as the majority of our earlier recommendations have been incorporated. The shared 30-year vision and the nine foundation areas reflect business viewpoints, which are premised on improving the competitiveness of our economy and fostering a business friendly environment.
  3. There are some preliminary targets and goals in the draft Queensland Plan where the interests of small and medium businesses could be better represented. CCIQ’s feedback focuses specifically on these aspects. Importantly, CCIQ believes the final Queensland Plan should recognise the economy as the first foundation area. It is business that provides secure employment that in turn delivers prosperity to the whole community. Therefore, creating a strong business operating environment is a precondition for realising the 30-year vision.

# Foundation Area 1: Education – building life skills and inspiring bright minds

* 1. Education is fundamental to developing a skilled workforce and therefore a priority for small and medium businesses. CCIQ strongly supports this foundation area and the vision statement.
  2. CCIQ highlights that there is both student-driven and employer-driven demand for education. To further strengthen education that meets business needs, CCIQ suggests including as part of Goal 1 these outcomes:
* we have a vocational education and training sector that meets the needs of both students and local employers
* we promote workforce planning for local employers to identify current and future needs,
* our private and public education and training providers compete on a level playing field with strong incentives for quality outcomes, and
* we have transparent reporting of results to guide continuous improvement in the vocational education and training sector.
  1. CCIQ also suggests for Goal 2 including these outcomes:
* we re-skill and re-train our existing workers so they can move seamlessly between industries, and
* we engage with businesses and industry to promote entrepreneurial skills.

# Foundation Area 2: Community – making connections

* 1. CCIQ agrees with the vision statement for this foundation area. However, the preliminary target “*anyone who makes Queensland their home has employment opportunities and is welcomed into the community*” is under represented.
  2. To better describe success for this foundation area, CCIQ suggests adding the following outcomes:
* we have diverse local jobs that enables people to contribute to the community,
* our local business leaders inspire and demonstrate community spirit, and
* our community buys locally produced products and services.
  1. CCIQ suggests including the number of businesses by local government area as a secondary measure.

# Foundation Area 3: Regions – building thriving communities

* 1. The content for this foundation area accurately reflects feedback from the business community. CCIQ fully supports the vision statement, preliminary target and goals. In particular, CCIQ strongly supports Goal 11 – “*we value and invest in local business and workers*” and the related outcomes describing success.
  2. The measures are also appropriate. CCIQ suggests as a secondary measure including the number of business start-ups outside South East Queensland.

# Foundation Area 4: Economy – forging diversity and prosperity

* 1. CCIQ believes the economy should be represented as the first foundation area. It is business that provides secure, ongoing employment that in turn, enhances society’s wellbeing. The Queensland Plan needs to recognise that the shared 30-year vision will ultimately depend on the competitiveness of our economy.
  2. The Queensland Plan should begin with creating a diverse and resilient economy that allows businesses to drive investment, innovation and employment. This will then allow the targets and goals in other foundation areas to be realised. By helping create a strong business operating environment over the next 30 years, we will deliver prosperity for the whole community. Queensland needs a business operating environment that is the absolute stand out in Australasia.
  3. To better reflect feedback from the business community, CCIQ suggests including as an additional goal – “Queensland is the best place to start a business in Australia”. Outcomes to describe success should include:
* we are the lowest taxing State in Australia
* we take a minimalist approach to regulation so local businesses can employ, invest and innovate
* we have dedicated services to help local businesses access finance and overseas markets
* we see our local businesses participating in major project developments, and
* we ensure government procurement processes support local businesses.
  1. CCIQ suggests including the local industry participation rates as a secondary measure.

# Foundation Area 5: Health and wellbeing – being healthy and active

* 1. CCIQ supports this foundation area but considers workplace health is under represented. Increasing labour participation and productivity requires both a healthy workforce and healthy workplaces.
  2. CCIQ suggests as part of Goal 18, including “we have safe and healthy workplaces” as an additional outcome. Success could be described as:
* we have the safest workplaces in Australia,
* we recognise employees that take responsibility for their own health and safety, and
* we encourage proactive and innovative business practices to improve health and safety.
  1. The number of workplace health and safety incidents (e.g. Lost Time Injuries, frequency rates) should be included as a secondary measure.

# Foundation Area 6: Environment – achieving balance

* 1. CCIQ supports the content for this foundation area. It appropriately reflects the views of the business community to use our environmental credentials as a source of competitive advantage. CCIQ agrees with the specific reference in the vision statement that “*we will be world leaders in sustainable business practices, exporting our expertise around the globe*”.
  2. The preliminary target is also appropriate. CCIQ strongly urges that the final target retain reference to a balance of environmental protection and economic development.
  3. CCIQ agrees with Goal 22 “*we invest in and adopt sustainable and renewable solutions”.* It is critical that in describing success for this goal, reference to commercially viable and competitiveness in renewable energy solutions is retained. CCIQ highlights that rising energy costs are a priority area of concern for small and medium businesses. Future energy solutions need to provide low cost supply for businesses.

# Foundation Area 7: People – creating opportunities for everyone

* 1. The vision statement, targets and goals for this foundation area appropriately reflect CCIQ’s previous feedback. People are the key consideration for businesses when deciding to expand or relocate. Therefore, supporting workforce participation and skills development across all demographics of the population (e.g. youth, mature-aged, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and minority groups) is good for business. So too is managing population-driven cost pressures.
  2. CCIQ suggests including as primary measures:
* skilled migration rates in Queensland
* apprenticeships in Queensland, and
* ranking of Queensland tertiary institutions relative to international institutions.

# Foundation Area 8: Infrastructure – being connected

* 1. CCIQ believes a more reasoned vision statement is needed for this foundation area that includes infrastructure affordability and appropriate infrastructure standards. The current references to “world-class infrastructure” and “state of the art technology” do little to address business concerns about the suitability of infrastructure in Queensland.
  2. The preliminary target should be refined to “*the right infrastructure is delivered in the right place at the right time* **and at the right cost**”. CCIQ believes this is imperative so the corresponding goals and outcomes reference cost-effective access to infrastructure.
  3. In addition, CCIQ believes this foundation area should recognise a broader role for the private sector. This would go beyond just increased private investment to include comprehensive private sector involvement in the planning, development, construction and operation of Queensland’s infrastructure.
  4. CCIQ suggests including the following outcomes to better describe success for this foundation area:
* we have access to reliable and affordable infrastructure
* we coordinate planning of infrastructure to improve accuracy of demand forecasts
* we use agreed standards to determine infrastructure reliability that matches demand
* we use flexible pricing options that encourage users to be efficient,
* we increase private sector involvement in planning, development and delivery of infrastructure, and
* we enjoy the price benefits of increased competition in essential infrastructure supply.
  1. CCIQ suggests including as secondary indicators:
* Average energy costs for both business and personal use, and
* Average water costs for both business and personal use.

# Foundation Area 9: Governance – balancing all our interests

* 1. CCIQ fully supports the vision statement, preliminary target and goals for this foundation area. It accurately reflects the persistent calls from businesses to implement outcome based regulation, empower low risk industries to self-regulate and streamline government service delivery.
  2. To reinforce the importance of consistent and cost-effective governance, CCIQ suggests including these additional outcomes:
* we make consistent decisions that give businesses confidence to invest
* we use technology to reduce the time and cost of business compliance, and
* we ensure regulation adds value to locally produced goods and services and gives local businesses a competitive advantage.
  1. CCIQ also believes red tape reduction should be represented as a primary measure.

# Concluding Remarks

* 1. CCIQ recognises the foundation areas are interdependent and therefore difficult to prioritise. However, CCIQ believes the economy should be represented as the first foundation area. It is burgeoning business activity and job opportunities that will allow Queenslanders to reach their potential as individuals and collectively in our society. CCIQ strongly urges the final Queensland Plan to retain targets and goals that garner efforts toward a strong, competitive business operating environment over the next 30 years.
  2. CCIQ notes that the Queensland Plan, when finalised, will guide the strategies and initiatives of the Queensland Government. A number of strategies are already well progressed, including the Tourism Strategy, Small Business Action Plan and Strategy, Science and Innovation Action Plan, Digital Strategy and 30 Year Energy Strategy. CCIQ recommends aligning these to the Queensland Plan so there is consistency of efforts across government agencies.
  3. Finally, CCIQ notes that a statistical baseline for all targets and measures will be included in the final Queensland Plan. CCIQ recommends also detailing a transparent and accountable process with milestones and timeframes to assess progress of each foundation area.