

MEDIA RELEASE - 24 March 2020

Western Queensland Mayors Call for State Government Stimulus Package

On the back of the Palaszczuk Government's announcement today it would provide a \$4 billion stimulus package for households and businesses, the leaders of Western Queensland have outlined a plan to keep their regions delivering for the nation as we unite to face down the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mayors from 21 councils are calling on the State Government to provide an economic stimulus package as soon as possible to ensure the region can continue delivering not just for its local communities, but state-wide – from agricultural products to other essential resources for households and industry.

As the COVID-19 pandemic deepens and Governments worldwide scramble to contain the virus and hold their economies together, now is the time to take action before we fall too far behind.

The Western Queensland Alliance of Councils covers almost 60% of the state's landmass and generates \$9.35 billion of the State's Gross Product from 1.3 per cent of Queensland's population – 2.2 times above the Queensland average.

The region already punches well above its weight with far less State Government funding than other regions, including for vital roads infrastructure - we definitely can't face this major crisis with business as usual.

In line with the Local Government Association of Queensland's broader representations, the Western Queensland Alliance of Councils seeks a stimulus packages for Western Queensland consisting of:

- Increased funding for community infrastructure programs such as the successful Works for Queensland program
- Increased funding for economic infrastructure, especially targeted at boosting investment in the regional road network
- A support package to assist outback tourism operators who - coming off the back of their offseason - will miss their critical peak season and are unlikely to generate any significant turnover until winter 2021
- Investment in promoting the Outback as a tourism destination when the pandemic passes to counter the State closing its borders
- Increased funding for skills development, financial counselling and other training programs
- Increased funding for economic development initiatives related to new business models associated with the digital economy and entrepreneurship.

This affirmative action from the councils represents more than half of the State united and ready to get to work with adequate funding - to provide solutions to positively impact economies, communities and mental health.

"Everywhere in the state is and will continue to be impacted by the pandemic but Western Queensland's contribution to the State's economy and prosperity justifies support for a stimulus package that keeps our powerhouse regions operating at full capacity," Cr Rob Chandler, Mayor of Barcaldine Regional Council said.

"Councils are well placed to respond and implement programs aimed at maintaining vital local jobs and providing additional job opportunities for workers displaced by the shut-down of businesses across our regions. Decisive action is needed by the State Government," said Cr Jack Bawden, Mayor of Carpentaria Shire Council.

"Councils have the ability to respond quickly and have proven time and time again we can get things happening on the ground. We need to move quickly to get the funding committed, works commenced and jobs and livelihoods saved in Western Queensland and beyond," Cr Richard Marsh, Mayor of Balonne Shire Council said.

The Western Queensland Alliance of Councils members include the councils of the North West Regional Organisation of Councils, the Central West Queensland Remote Area Planning and Development Board, and South West Queensland Local Government Association.

- ENDS -

Contacts

NWQROC

Cr Jack Bawden
Chair, NWQROC
Ph: 0427 459 424

Greg Hoffman PSM
Executive Officer, NWQROC
Ph: 0418 756 005

RAPAD

Cr Rob Chandler
Chair, RAPAD
Ph: 0427 512 312

David Arnold
CEO, RAPAD
Ph: 0428583 301

South West LGA

Cr Richard Marsh
Chair, South West LGA
Ph: 0409 692 299

Matthew Magin
CEO, Balonne Shire Council
matthew.magin@balonne.qld.gov.au