

Agricultural Competitiveness Green Paper Submission

Date submitted

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Name of Organisation/Individual

Charters Towers Regional Council

What are the top policies from the Green Paper that the Government should focus on in the White Paper and why?

1) Provision of infrastructure including water and electricity.

From a local perspective, infrastructure needs that Council considers essential for the further development of agriculture in its immediate region include:

a) Water storage facilities - To facilitate diversification of irrigated agricultural on the fertile riparian areas associated with the Burdekin River catchment.

b) Northern Base Load Power Station - Reduction of electricity costs presently experienced due to price structure reflecting line losses. Costs at present are too expensive for viable irrigation distribution systems.

c) Electricity Distribution Infrastructure - Lack of reticulated three phase power is a constraint towards development of full potential of irrigation schemes along the upper Burdekin River system.

2) Improving the tax system efficiency and equity.

It is well documented that due to cost inhibitions brought about by issues such as tyranny of distance, remoteness, climatic extremes and small population centres, costs of doing business in the Northern Region, including Council's Region, is much dearer than enjoyed in the southern sphere.

This factor alone creates an immediate cost advantage to business commencing and operating in the southern sphere. A level playing field is non-existent and is obviously not an inducement to establishment of viable agricultural operations in the North when significant advantage through cost structure is available elsewhere.

It is therefore essential for the good work being done in the reduction of both green and red tape to be supported by further fiscal reform in a manner to:

a) facilitate as best as possible a level playing field by reducing the competitive edge available through lesser input and other operational costs already available in the developed south cheaper; and

b) provide financial incentive for the attraction of investors necessary for the provision of required infrastructure.

What policies from the Green Paper don't you support and why?

Council supports all policies identified.

General Comment

Notwithstanding the Government's position regarding the necessity for private investment towards funding new infrastructure to grow agriculture, it remains critical for government to be involved in early investment towards provision of infrastructure so as to instil confidence in private investment and mitigate adverse risk constraints by portraying stability through government presence on development.