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| ORDINARY MEETING 27 SEPTEMBER 2017 | 1 |
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ADVANCING REGIONAL INNOVATION PROGRAM

Belinda Hutchinson | 1/8/5 | #5519182

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council notes this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report provides an overview of the Queensland Government's Advancing Regional Innovation Program (ARIP) in Far North Queensland and Council's involvement with this program.

The ARIP aims to assist regions in building sustainable innovation ecosystems, with an emphasis on collaboration between government and industry. In the Far North Queensland region, ARIP funding will be provided via lead entity Ignite Far North Queensland Limited (Ignite FNQ).

Council actively participated in the process to obtain the \$500,000 in funding for the region. Council will continue to support this program through participation in working groups and provision of \$10,000 financial support, which will contribute towards the matched funding requirement.

Other participating organisations include Regional Development Australia Far North Queensland and Torres Strait, James Cook University, Central Queensland University, Tablelands Regional Council, theSPACE Cairns, enVizion Group and Northern Gulf Resource Management Group. Twenty-nine letters of support have been received from a much broader group including TAFE Queensland North, a number of other Councils, peak bodies and businesses.

The intended outcome of the ARIP is to encourage innovation and support local economies to create jobs. This aligns with Council's Corporate Plan Vision to "be innovative and creative, grow and diversify our economy" and Economic Strategic Goal of "a strong, diversified and resilient regional economy that supports the growth of new and existing industry, business activities and provides long term employment opportunities."

BACKGROUND:

Advance Queensland, part of the Queensland Government's Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation, has established the ARIP to encourage innovation across Queensland and support regional economies to create jobs. This is a collaborative program in which key stakeholders from industry and government work together to deliver activities through a coordinated effort in each of the twelve regions

throughout the state. The intent is to grow a sustainable ecosystem model that will continue to operate after the ARIP funding ceases.

On 30 June 2017, Innovation Minister Leeanne Enoch announced that \$500,000 from the ARIP will be provided to Ignite FNQ, the lead applicant for the Far North Queensland region. \$20,000 of this funding has already been paid as seed funding to enable preliminary planning to take place. The remaining \$480,000 will be paid over a period of three years and is required to be matched by partners and supporters, providing a total fund of up to \$1 million over three years.

The vision of Ignite FNQ is to “Connect and empower diverse Far North Queensland communities by fostering innovation to build social, economic and environmental prosperity.” The value proposition is “to enable a regionally-connected network of innovation by providing the tools, support services and training to build capacity and capability for fostering success in growing jobs through start-ups and existing businesses.” This is consistent with Council’s Corporate Plan 2017-2022 Vision to “be innovative and creative, grow and diversify our economy” and Economic Strategic Goal of “a strong, diversified and resilient regional economy that supports the growth of new and existing industry, business activities and provides long term employment opportunities.”

Ignite FNQ is a not for profit company formed with the support of partners across the region including Regional Development Australia Far North Queensland and Torres Strait, Cairns Regional Council, Tablelands Regional Council, theSPACE Cairns, enVizion Group, Northern Gulf Resource Management Group, James Cook University and Central Queensland University. Representatives from these partner organisations have formed a working group to progress this initiative. Twenty-nine letters of support have been received from a much broader group including a number of other Councils, peak bodies, TAFE Queensland North and businesses.

Ignite FNQ is governed by a Board of Directors. Recruitment processes will soon begin to appoint a Board Chairperson. Current directors include:

- John Brisbin, Board Chair, Northern Gulf Resource Management Group Ltd.;
- Dr Allan Dale, Professor of Tropical Regional Development, The Cairns Institute, James Cook University;
- Troy Haines, CEO, theSPACE Australasia; and
- Julie-ann Lambourne, CEO, enVizion Group Inc.

COMMENT:

The FNQ region extends from Cassowary Coast in the south to the Cape and Torres Strait in the north and west to the Queensland NT border (see Attachment 1). It will be operated through a core and outreach model.

Ignite FNQ will be working with key stakeholders to develop a three year program of events, activities and workshops to help build innovation capability in our region. Activities in the first year will focus on developing communication and data capture systems, activating connectivity throughout the region and building capacity. It is proposed that Ignite FNQ representatives will travel to outreach locations to engage with local stakeholders, run workshops and identify areas for future collaboration. Possible activities in core locations include start up events and a digital innovation

conference. An important role of Ignite FNQ will be to support and promote existing innovation activities and events that are delivered by partners and other organisations throughout Far North Queensland.

Once initial ARIP funding has been received, recruitment processes will begin to engage a Regional Innovation Coordinator. This position will be funded through the ARIP. The Coordinator will become the primary contact point for stakeholder communications.

Council will provide support to Ignite FNQ for the first year of the program as follows:

- Financial contribution in the amount of \$10,000 (ex GST);
- In kind support through provision of meeting rooms when available; and
- Council staff participation in the partner working group.

Council support is conditional upon formal representation in Ignite FNQ as a Founding Member and representation on any applicable panels or committees that may be established. Council support beyond the first year of operation will be contingent upon a review of outcomes achieved for the community and contribution towards delivery of Council's corporate plan objectives.

The success of ARIP will largely depend upon collaboration between key organisations to provide a strong program. Council has existing, established relationships with the organisations supporting ARIP in this region. Ongoing Council participation gives opportunity to strengthen these important relationships and provide input into the program, which will add value and lead to better outcomes for Cairns and the region.

Council's Tropical North Queensland Innovation Awards 2018 will continue to be owned and delivered by Council. Council engagement in the ARIP may provide opportunity for additional support and exposure for the Awards throughout the region.

OPTIONS:

This report is for noting.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Risk Management:

Ignite FNQ will operate within the terms and conditions of the Financial Incentive Agreement between Ignite FNQ and the Queensland Government.

Ignite FNQ is a not for profit company limited by guarantee. The company's internal management is governed by a Constitution. In the event of the company winding up, Member liability is limited to \$10.00. Appropriate insurance cover, such as public liability insurance, will be obtained once funding has been received.

Funding to match the ARIP contribution of \$480,000 is yet to be confirmed, however this potential risk is mitigated by support from a variety of credible organisations which have committed to participate in working groups in addition to providing some financial and in-kind support. Risk mitigation also comes via Council's ability to review involvement after the first year of operation.

ARIP is based on collaboration between government, education providers, private industry and other organisations. Local Government is considered a key stakeholder in the program and integral to its success, with many Councils supporting their local Advancing Regional Innovation Programs.

Council Finance and the Local Economy:

Provision has been made for the financial contribution of \$10,000 (ex GST) in the 2017/2018 Economic Development budget.

Council's funding contributes to the matched funding requirement for ARIP. Other Councils, government entities and private organisations will also be making financial and in-kind contributions. The Queensland Government has made a commitment to provide total funding of \$500,000.

The ARIP aims to turn Queensland's regions into hubs for innovation and enterprise, unlock business potential, strengthen existing industries and prepare regional Queenslanders for jobs of the future. There is a strong focus on job creation and economic outcomes.

Community and Cultural Heritage

Collaboration between a diverse range of partners is a core element of the ARIP, both within Cairns and throughout the broader region. This collaboration will enable the Cairns community to access a larger innovation ecosystem and knowledge base.

Natural Environment

Ignite FNQ realises the value of the natural environment and has referenced social, economic and environmental prosperity as being an important component of the vision of the group. As a service based organisation which uses digital technologies for communications, Ignite FNQ will have minimal impact on the natural environment.

Corporate and Operational Plans:

Project outcomes support Council's Corporate Plan 2017-2022:

Vision:

Be innovative and creative, grow and diversify our economy.

Strategic Goal 1.0 Economy:

A strong, diversified and resilient regional economy that supports the growth of new and existing industry, business activities and provides long term employment opportunities.

Strategic objectives:

- *Support a strong and diverse economy;*
- *Grow and sustain employment and education opportunities;*
- *Deliver events, activities and performances that bring economic and social benefits to the community; and*
- *Embrace a smart communities agenda and inspire innovation and entrepreneurship through access to technology and resources.*

Statutory:

Under the *Local Government Act 2009*, Council can delegate authority to the Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer to finalise matters in relation to this report.

CONSULTATION:

Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation
Partner organisations as identified above
Internal consultation: Office of the CEO and Planning and Environment

ATTACHMENTS:

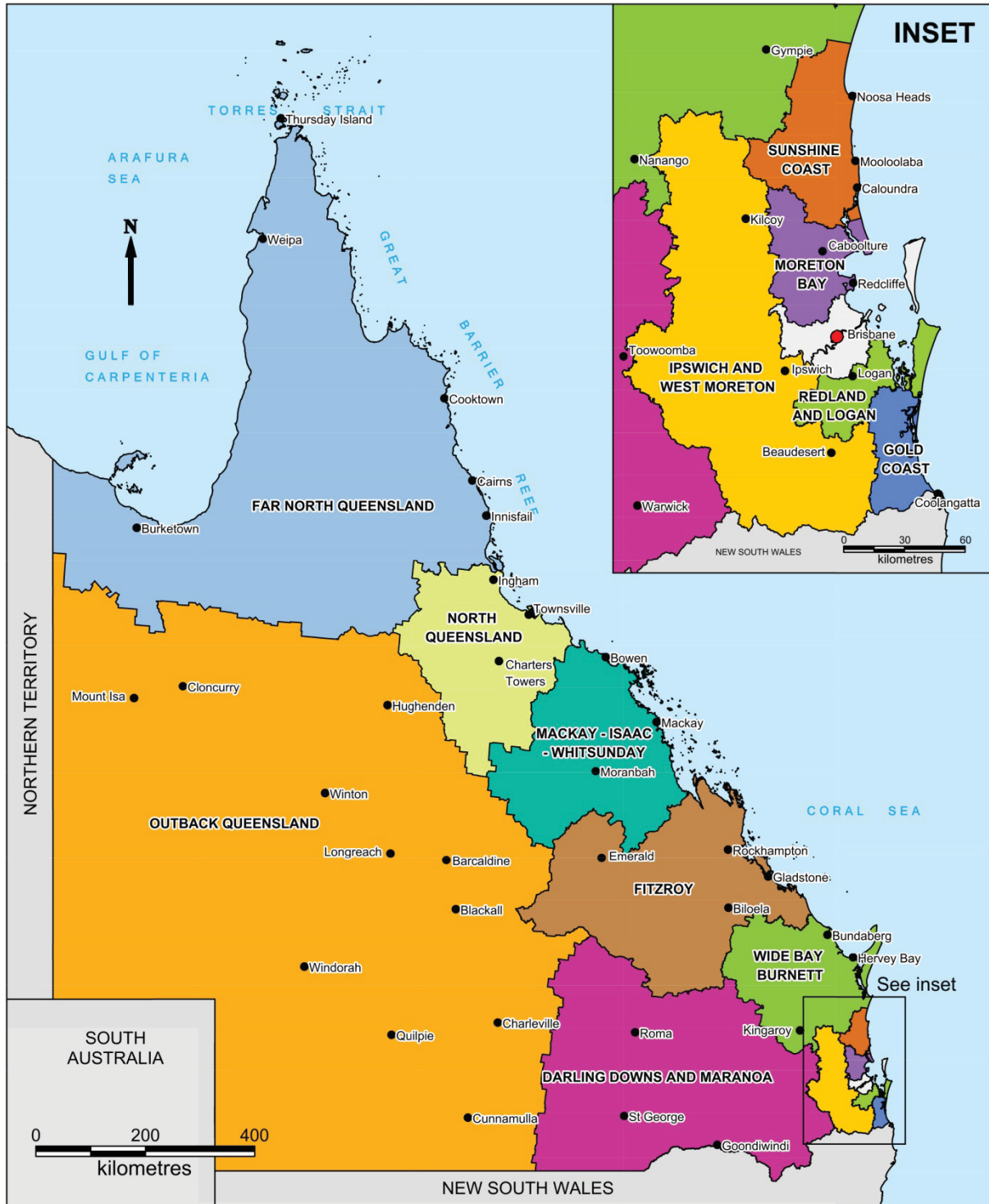
Attachment 1: Map of Advancing Regional Innovation Program Regions

Belinda Hutchinson
Economic Development Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Masasso', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Nick Masasso
Executive Project Officer

ATTACHMENT 1: MAP OF ADVANCING REGIONAL INNOVATION PROGRAM REGIONS



<http://www.qgso.qld.gov.au>
Advancing Regional Innovation Program - Regional Areas
created using ABS, ASGS 2016, Local Government Area boundaries.

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